THE VETERAN

Vietnam Veterans Against the War

50¢

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VIETNAM VETS' ACTIONS IN APRIL DEMAND,

NO INTERVENTION IN CENTRAL AMERICA! NO MORE VIETNAMS!

April 19th, 1986, marks the 15th anniversary of Operation Dewey Canyon III. This action, described as a "limited incursion into the halls of Congress," included 2000 Vietnam veterans organized by VVAW and changed the face of the anti-war movement.

Prior to that time Nixon and the government tried to portray all veterans as right-wing, patriotic blockheads who supported the war in Vietnam. Generals and career military men were given prime time coverage to push continued U.S. involvement in Vietnam. In fact Nixon said that we were in Vietnam to protect "our boys there" and to honor the sacrifices of those who died there.

On April 19, 1971, Vietnam vets themselves challenged that idea. Dewey Canyon III, named after U.S. secret operations into Laos, established that Vietnam vets did not agree with Nixon or the brass. For 5 days we lobbied Congress, marched, sat in at the Supreme Court, defied the Capitol police on camping, and, on the final day, threw away our medals. This event, more than any other, captured headlines worldwide as 1200 vets one by one ripped medals won in Vietnam off their chests demanding an immediate end to U.S. involvement in Indochina. From then to the end of the war no comparable group of Vietnam veterans ever challenged VVAW or our position on the war.

While that war is over it seems our government's willingness to enter another one is not.

In Central America today the U.S. is following the same policies and actions that led to 58,000 dead Americans in Vietnam, in addition to a million or so Vietnamese. The U.S. is even going so far as to promise the use of Agent Orange in Central America!

In response VVAW is again promising action. No one group can speak to the American public with as much credibility as vets. We are asking other groups in the U.S. to support us by publicizing this event, endorsing it, and, we hope, joining us in it. On Saturday, April 19th, VVAW will sponsor regional demonstrations against Intervention in Central America, to be held in New York, Chicago, San Antonio and Athens, Georgia in order to bring Vietnam veterans out in opposition to a future Vietnam. At the same time, a delegation of VVAW members will be in Nicaragua completing a week of fact-finding. They will join us in demonstrating against U.S. involvement, at the U.S. Embassy in Managua, Nicaragua.

M.KUHNER

We Won't Fight Another Rich Man's War- And Neither Will Our Children!

Gramm-Rudman Amendmend Hits Widows, Orphans and More

BUDGET CUTS ENDANGER V. A.

Ronald Reagan and the majority of Congress have dealt service-connected disabled veterans and the VA system itself a heavy-handed blow. This article will attempt to lay out what the cuts would mean to veterans and their families if more revenue is not raised. We shall also look at who led this attack on veterans and what they said.

We want to thank the DAV Magazine of December 1985; I will quote alot from it. If all the traditional veterans organizations fought as hard as the DAV, we veterans would be a major force to be reckoned with.

First, what is the Gramm-Rudman Amendment? "This amendment mandates cuts of roughly $36 billion a year over the next five years, thereby reducing the federal deficit entirely and balancing the budget by fiscal year 1991. If Congress can't come up with the cuts, or if projected estimates are off and more cuts are needed, the President would be required to make sweeping, across-the-board reductions to bring federal spending into line.

"This 'sequestering' provision effectively transfers Congress' authority on budget matters to the White House.

"When the measure was introduced in the Senate, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) was asked to do an analysis of Gramm-Rudman. In response the CBO said that "If the overage provisions of the Gramm-Rudman amendment were implemented in FY 86, all 2.2 million (service-connected) veterans and all 300,000 of their survivors would lose at least 3% of their benefits. By 1991 this reduction would most likely exceed 20%.' Further, '... based on overage employee salaries, the cut could mean a loss of 11,000 personnel in the first year. This is 23% of all doctors, nurses, psychologists and dentists now employed by the VA medical care system.

"During debate in the House, Chairman Montgomery (of the Veterans Committee) decided to sttle the numbers battle once and for all. To that end, he directed VA Administrator Harry N. Walters to appear before the House Veterans Affairs Committee and answer questions concerning the impact of Gramm-Rudman on veterans programs and services.

"At White House direction Walters refused to appear before the Committee, and some Congressmen called for a subpoena in order to force Walters' testimony.

"Instead, Walters sent Montgomery a letter broadly outlining the impact Gramm-Rudman would have on the VA and couched in nonspecific terms. What wasn't known at the time was that Walters had drafted an earlier, much more specific letter to the Chairman--a letter that was killed by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) on review.

"That initial letter, a copy

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Nonprofit Organization
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FRAGGIN'

Sp5 Willy(Ret.)
A.K.A.
Bill Shunas

Ashes to ashes. And now, dust to dust--Russian dust. If U.S.-Soviet conflicts don't turn us all into ashes and dust, someone in the future can make an hilarious Peter Sellers-type movie about the real life stumbling and bumbling of superpower spies and counter-spies.

The latest episode has to do with the revelation that the Soviets have been placing a dust-like chemical on the doorknobs and steering wheels of the homes and cars of Americans in Moscow. The dust could be made visible under ultraviolet light and theoretically expose any Russian citizens who have had contact with Americans.

Now the Americans are charging that the dust is carcinogenic and has endangered Americans in Moscow. If true, that is pretty nasty on the part of the Russians. However, when you deal with the nastiness of one superpower, you don't have to look very far to see that nastiness matched by the other superpower. In this case, the Americans revealed the Russians' use of the cancer-causing dust--nine years after they became aware of its use. (This knowledge was probably revealed now as part of the propaganda posturing having to do with the upcoming summit meeting.)

I wonder what the Russians planned to do in the case of those Americans who were compulsive house cleaners. You know the kind. They go around once a day with a dust rag. "State Secret Wiped Out by Mr Clean." Nevertheless, can you imagine being called into interrogation by the KGB?

"Comrade, Sister Marya, the ultraviolet light reveals the handprint of an American on your person."

"Where?"

"Where you sit."

"Oh. Well, you know how fresh those Americans are."

Or,

"Comrade Vladimir, is good news and bad news."

"What is the bad news?"

"Ultraviolet light reveals you have many contacts with agents of imperialism."

"And what is the good news?"

"Because dust has given you cancer, you v . not have to be sent to mental institution for rehabilitation."

Maybe the Russians got their ideas for secret dust from the U.S. when they discovered a U.S. plan called Commando Lava to be used in Vietnam. This was one of many silly plans the U.S. was going to use to try to cut off enemy infiltration and supplies along the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

The idea of Commando Lava was to clear out a section of the Ho Chi Minh Trail and saturate it with atomic dust and mustard gas. To clear the trail they had planned to defoliate the area. Can you imagine how many more Agent Orange victims that would have created? And the Vietnamese would probably have re-routed the Trail anyway.

In all these stories you see the same trend over and over again. The big powers pursue their objectives and don't give a damn about their own citizens and soldiers. While the leaders of the countries keep everyone on edge about the possibility of going to war, the soldiers on both sides have more in common than most people realize.

Take tankers for example. About four years ago I wrote in this column about a Vietnam vet at Fort Sill who comandeered an APC and rolled over a guard shack and out onto the highway and into town with all sorts of cop cars chasing him and unable to bring him to a stop until they used tear gas. I thought of this story when I read about a Russian tank crew on maneuvers in Czechoslovakia.

It seems that this tank crew was thirsty. Unlike Americans who probably would prefer beer or whiskey, this Russian crew was after vodka. Come to think of it, maybe we should fight the Russians. Hardly anybody here drinks vodka. They must be perverts. We must defend Schiltz and Budweiser. Smash Smirnof!

Anyway, the four-man tank crew was out cruising the highways one night in the Czechloslovakian countryside when they finished off their ration of vodka. It was raining, and there wasn't much to do so they decided that maybe they ought to get some more vodka. They put their money together and came up with enough to buy another bottle. So, they rolled along until they came to a country pub. They parked their tank in a pigsty and went in to drink their next bottle.

Unfortunately, one bottle doesn't go very far with four thirsty tankers, so the crew chief traded his wedding ring for a few more rounds. Things began to get fuzzy after that. Later on the crew was seen leaving the pub with two cases of vodka and several pounds of herring and pickles. The next that was heard about the tank crew was two days later when police found them sleeping in the woods.

A few days later, good fortune shone upon the owner of the pub. It was reported that a metal recycling center paid him a large sum of money for a sawed up load of high quality steel. Further investigation found the remains of the tank cluttering his pigsty and disturbing his pigs.

I don't know what happened to the Russian tank crew, but this story goes to show how much alike we really are. I can imagine a lot of guys I knew in the Army doing the same thing. And the owner of the pub? He tried to cover his ass by saying that he threw in the herring and pickles as a gesture of camaraderie with the Soviet troops, but what he did was a very capitalistic thing. From now on, he had better watch his door knobs and steering wheels. They're likely to be covered with cancer dust.

GRENADE OF THE MONTH

I think we need to toss a grenade in the direction of the Italian Stallion--Sylvester Stallone. This guy made his "Rocky" movies, and everyone kind of related to him. He represented the underdog fighting to get ahead.

Then, in "First Blood," he was the Vietnam vet who got no respect and no job. The movie was okay, but there were two things that disturbed me about his Vietnam vet character. First, the Vietnam vet seemed a little stupid to let himself get stuck in that situation, and second, he was beginning to develop the theme of, "They wouldn't let us win the war."

Then, of course, there came "Rambo" with its rewriting of the war, its appeal to national chauvinism and its unreal conception of what happens in battle.

Stallone should get a grenade for two reasons. The first (and perhaps lesser reason) is that the guy is making lots of money off his Vietnam vet character when he doesn't deserve to polish the boots of a Vietnam vet. He was of cannon fodder age during Vietnam, but he spent those years chaperoning a girls' school in Switzerland. (More power to you if you got out of Vietnam, but don't come around getting rich pretending to portray a Vietnam vet.) Then, he got his start on the silver screen on the pornographic circuit. His first X-rated movie, by the way, was "Italian Stallion" which is where he got his nickname--not from Rocky Balboa or his ethnic heritage. Now that's what I call a real war hero. *The only merit badge he* qualified for was R&R.

The second reason for giving the grenade to the Italian Stallion is that the chauvinism and glorification of war in his pictures make many young minds eager to try their hands at war. It also makes many small minds eager too. Witness Ronald Reagan. He made another foot-in-mouth statement about the hostages in Beirut when he said, "Boy, I saw 'Rambo' last night. I know what to do the next time this happens." A joke? Perhaps not because some people believe in the Hollywood version of life--some very influential people.

Because young minds and small minds can be poisoned by the Italian Stallions of the world, they deserve a grenade. The next time they make a movie about the U.S. version of what happened in Vietnam, they really ought to resurrect Peter Sellers. His would be an accurate portrayal of American leadership.

San Fernando Valley billboard.

(The following letter requests the support and endorsement of individuals and organizations for VVAW's planned activities

VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR

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National Coordinators

Bill Davis (312)386-1413 | Barry Romo (312)327-5756 | Peter Zastrow (312)761-8248 | John Lindquist (414)963-0398

January 1986

Dear Friend,

On April 19th, 1986, Vietnam Veterans Against the War will hold regional demonstrations throughout the United States.

This date marks the 15th anniversary of Dewey Canyon III, an action called by VVAW which brought together thousands of veterans in Washington, DC, to protest against the war in Southeast Asia. On April 19, 1971 these Vietnam veterans concluded the week's activities by throwing their medals away.

Since the end of the Vietnam War, VVAW has been active in the anti-intervention movement as well as various veterans' issues. This upcoming demonstration will be aimed at U.S. intervention in Central America, specifically Nicaragua.

The April 19th demonstrations will coincide with a simultaneous action by VVAW members at the U.S. Embassy in Managua, Nicaragua.

In view of your contributions to the movement for peace and for justice, VVAW invites and encourages your participation in this significant anti-war event. Here's how you can help:

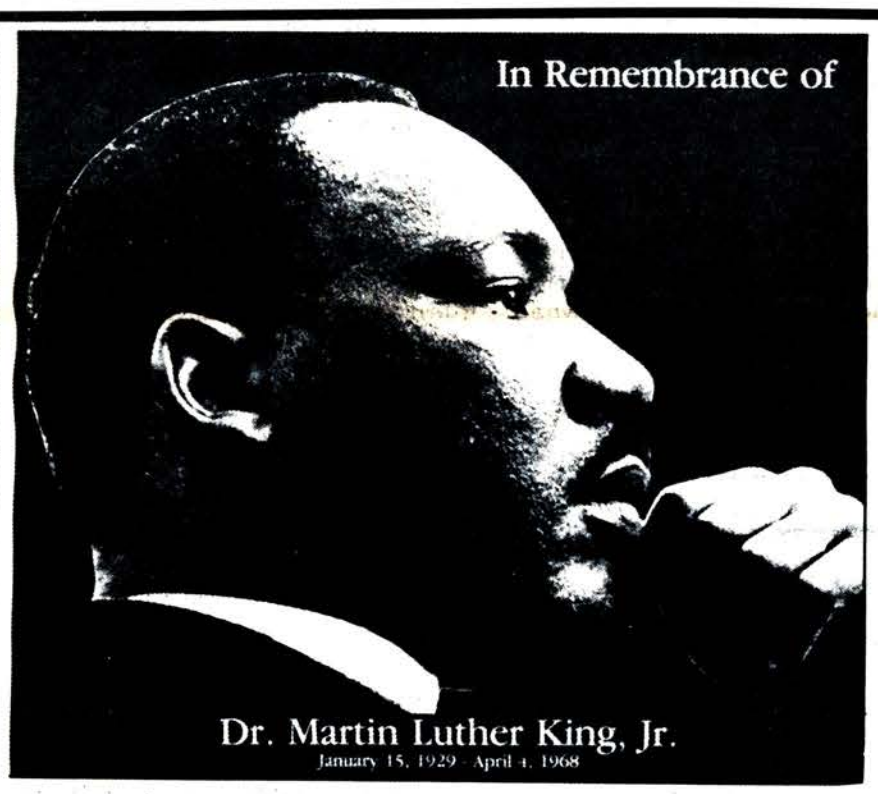
ENDORSE this VVAW action.
ADVERTISE this event in your newsletter or by word of mouth.
Gather your own CONTINGENT and come to the event. Organizational banners are welcome
Make a DONATION (tax-deductible) to support the event.

Our hope is that this demonstration will help to mobilize people to fight against the immoral U.S. involvement in Central America. We appreciate any support you can give to make this event a success. For more information, or to find out about plans for your area, please contact the VVAW National Office or one of the regional coordinators listed in THE VETERAN.

Thank you for your consideration.

Yours in the struggle,

THE VVAW NATIONAL OFFICE



. . . The Western arrogance of feeling that it has everything to teach others and nothing to learn from them is not just. A true revolution of values will lay hands on the world order and say of war: "This way of settling differences is not just." This business of burning human beings with napalm, of filling our nation's homes with orphans and widows, of injecting poisonous drugs of hate into the veins of peoples normally humane, of sending men home from dark and bloody battlefields physically handicapped and psychologically deranged, cannot be reconciled with wisdom, justice, and love. A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual doom . . .

—The Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., Fall, 1967

Chronology: Operation Dewey Canyon III

Operation Dewey Canyon I took place during January and February 1969. During a five-day period in February, elements of the Third Marine Division invaded Laos. Operation Dewey Canyon II was the name given to the first seven days of the South Vietnamese invasion of Laos in February 1971. The name of the operation was subsequently changed. Operation Dewey Canyon III took place in Washington, D.C., April 19 through April 23, 1971. It was called "a limited incursion into the country of Congress."

Gold Star Mothers and veterans are barred at Arlington.

Sunday/April 18, 1971

Anti-war Vietnam veterans from nearly every state begin filtering into West Potomac Park.

Monday/April 19, 1971

About 1,100 veterans move across the Lincoln Memorial Bridge to Arlington Cemetery, some in wheelchairs, some on crutches. Mothers who lost their sons in Vietnam (Gold Star Mothers) head the procession.

A brief ceremony for the war dead on both sides is conducted by Reverend Jackson Day on the small plot of grass outside the Cemetery beneath the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and the grave of John F. Kennedy. (Reverend Day had resigned his military chaplainship a few days before.)

After the ceremony, a small delegation of mothers and veterans is barred from entering the Cemetery and lays two memorial wreaths at the entrance. The march re-forms and makes its way to the Capitol.

The march reaches the Capitol steps. Congressman Paul McCloskey, who joined the march en route, and Representatives Bella Abzug, Donald Edwards, and Ogden Reid address the crowd. Jan Crumb, member of the executive committee of VVAW, formally presents sixteen demands to Congress.

The veterans march to the Mall and establish a campsite on a small grassy quadrangle

Some veterans go directly into the halls of Congress to lobby against the war.

Washington District Court of Appeals lifts an injunction barring veterans from camping on the Mall. The injunction had been requested by the Justice Department.

Veterans march from Arlington to the Capitol steps.

John Kerry testifies before Senate Foreign Relations Committee

Tuesday/April 20, 1971

Veterans lobby all day in Congress.

A contingent of 200 veterans, feeling that the affront of the day before cannot be overlooked, marches from the Mall back to Arlington Cemetery. They march single file across the Lincoln Memorial Bridge. The Superintendent tries to stop the veterans at the gates but then backs down.

Police arrest veterans at Supreme Court.

Wednesday/April 21, 1971

Lobbying on Capitol Hill continues all day.

Washington Park Police state they have no intention of inspecting the campsite during the night. The cast of the musical *Hair* entertains the troops.

Thursday/April 22, 1971

A large group of veterans march to the steps of the Supreme Court to ask the Court why it has not ruled on the constitutionality of the war. They sing *God Bless America*. One hundred and ten are arrested for disturbing the peace and are led off the steps with their hands clasped behind their heads.

John Kerry testifies before a special session of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee for two hours.

Veterans stage a candlelight march around the White House. A huge American flag is carried upside down as a signal of distress. The march ends back at the camp when the flag carriers mount the stage

Neil Olsen of Russell, Pa., wearing his dead son's army fatigue jacket, blows taps before the medals are turned back.

Friday/April 23, 1971

Veterans cast down their medals and ribbons on the steps of the Capitol.

Congressman Jonathan Bingham holds hearings with former intelligence and public information officers over distortion of news and information concerning the war.

The quadrangle on the Mall is vacant. Not one act of violence has been committed. They came in peace.

Veteran hurling medal on the steps of Congress.

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VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR

A Non-Profit Tax Deductible National Veterans Organization Established in 1967.

29th NATIONAL VVAW MEETING

VVAW recently held its 29th National Steering Committee Meeting in Jersey City, NJ.

A number of important decisions were made at this meeting which also included a summation of work during the past year and re-election of officers.

Agent Orange

The Agent Orange campaign was summed up by National Coordinator John Lindquist. He pointed out the disappointment and anger that was felt nationally over the sell-out settlement agreed to by "our" lawyers. He said that most of the local Agent Orange groups which had appeared around the lawsuit had now ceased to exist because of burn-out over the sell-out.

Suki Wachtendonk of the Madison VVAW Chapter proposed a medical conference around the issues of Agent Orange to be organized and sponsored by VVAW. This was discussed and passed by the body with members of chapters volunteering to coordinate local work for a national conference in Madison.

Central America

The situation in Central America was discussed thoroughly and passionately. It was the unanimous feeling that American aggression in Central America was increasing and the possibility of another Vietnam existed. In response we decided to hold regional demonstrations on the 15th anniversary of Operation Dewey Canyon III on April 19th, 1986. The theme will be 15 years ago we fought against an immoral war in Vietnam; now we must fight against another "Vietnam" in Central America. Our demand will be "Money for Benefits, Not Dictators and Terrorists."

Other Business

Again this year VVAW awarded the Veterans' Service Award to deserving individuals who have worked unselfishly in the cause of veterans and brought credit to the veteran community. This year three individuals were recipients of these awards: Mike Gold and Laurie Sandow of New York City, and Bill Branson of Chicago.

Bill Davis, John Lindquist, Barry Romo and Pete Zastrow were unanimously re-elected to the National Office of VVAW, with great praise for their past work.

The meeting also discussed problems vets were having with the VA, VVAW's opposition to apartheid and support for majority rule in South Africa, the dangerous situation in the Philippines and high school counter recruitment.

Central America Update

US MEDIA 'REALITY' IGNORES FACTS

(The following report is prepared by Evan Douthit, editor of Central America News Update, a twice-montly summary of news articles on Central America which is published in Chicago.)

If one follows the U.S. media, the image (to the extent that you get one) of the situation in Central America is of the U.S. on the march, the Nicaraguan economy in shambles, the Salvadoran guerrillas on the run, and the only thing holding the U.S. back from giving its enemies the coup de grace are odd pangs of moral conscience that no other nation in the world ever suffers from.

Oddly enough, this view of reality does not accord with the information that one finds in the Mexican press, especially the Mexican daily Excelsior. There one gets the idea that the Contras are smashed, the Salvadoran guerrillas are politically and militarily on the offensive, Guatemala and El Salvador are in severe economic and political crisis, and Honduras and Costa Rica are in the process of being destabilized by U.S. intervention and their own economic crises. Meanwhile the U.S. is under mounting attack from the other governments of Latin America where the ruling elites are increasingly convinced that U.S. greed on the debt problem and U.S. clumsiness in Central America will succeed in destabilizing the whole of Latin America.

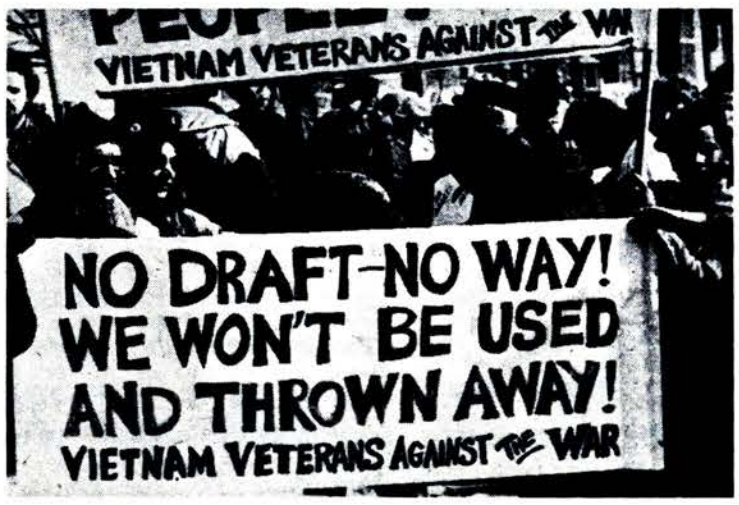
In El Salvador U.S. aid has reached $2 million a day while the military engages in intense bombing of civilians in the 40% of the country controlled by the guerrillas. These facts, both virtually unreported in the U.S. media, testify to the increasing desperation of the government's position. Unable to make their troops fight, the government must bomb; unable to make the economy work, they must rely on U.S. aid to survive. The guerrillas, in response, have spread their forces throughout the country to to engage in a political, economic and military war of attrition. In daily small clashes and acts of sabotage, the guerrillas are bleeding the Salvadoran army white and shattering the government's war economy.

In Guatemala the worst economic depression since the 30's has sent thousands into the streets in protests and on strike. The government has declared itself insolvent, important financial figures speak of imminent "total collapse," and the contradictions among the ruling elites has led to army death squads being unleashed on right-wing businessmen. Meanwhile, the guerrillas in the countryside are increasingly active, the Guerrilla Army of the Poor, for example, overrunning five villages on September 24th and decimating an army column three days later.

In Nicaragua the government is smashing Contra raids (they can hardly be labeled offensives anymore) at will. U.S. isolation over the Reagan Administration's agression against Nicaragua has increased with the formation of the Lima group (Peru, Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay) which supports the Contadora group (Mexico, Columbia, Panama, and Venezuela) in its attempts to reach a peace agreement in Central America. As the U.S. continues to try to sabotage the Contadora process it has come under violent criticism in Latin America. The Panamanian Foreign Minister even went so far as to warn Elliot Abrams, U.S. Under Secretary of State for Latin America, that "The time has come to show who is for peace in Central America, and who is for war."

The U.S. has been further embarrassed by the trial in the World Court where Nicaragua is suing the U.S. for damages. The Nicaragua legal effort is being spearheaded by American lawyers and several of the most damaging witnesses have been former U.S. employees such as David MacMichael, ex-CIA Central America specialist, who testified that Nicaragua has not supplied arms to Salvadoran guerrillas for over four years, and Edgar Chamorro, an ex-leader of the Contras who testified about U.S. control of the Contras and about Contra atrocities.

It is against this background that the risks of a U.S. invasion of Nicaragua or El Salvador must be viewed. The U.S. would suffer a political bloodbath for such an act and the Nicaraguans have threatened, in the event of an invasion, to regionalize the war. There can be no doubt that there are tens of thousands of people in Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras and Costa Rica who would take guns from Nicaragua if they were offered. This and opposition at home has resulted in the impass that the Reagan Administration is in.



WE WANT YOU TO JOIN!!

VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR

Point Man of the Vets' Movement

VVAW is recruiting. If you are reading THE VETERAN and, especially, if you are reading this article, we want you to join. If you are already a VVAW member (and we hope you are) maybe you can find someone else interested in the activities of VVAW to join up.

There are, to be honest, a lot of things VVAW cannot do for you. If you are one of the Vietnam vets who is into "coming-home parades" and "welcome back ceremonies," if your thing is more memorials and monuments, then we are probably not the right organization for you. Not that we condemn parades or monuments--we've helped build the memorials and marched in the parades. But we've usually done so with the understanding that better VA care or a realistic jobs program will help vets far more than another obelisk. And we've been fortunate enough to draw distinctions between some real attempts to honor vets and the charades put on by a few self-serving veterans looking for titles, money, prestige or careers.

VVAW can't do much to help you through VA red tape or get you better care in a VA hospital. We have, for years, fought as vocally and visibly as possible for better VA care, to remind the public (even when Vietnam vets were not as popular as we seem to be today) that there was an obligation to those who served even if we served in an unpopular and useless war. VVAW did, we hope, have some influence on the formation of the system of vets outreach centers and in keeping the centers alive when the government planned to ax them.

And, unfortunately, VVAW can't do much to help vets find a job, something that the government should have been doing ever since we got home. Of course we can give you a job with VVAW, but all that promises is a lot of hours (as many as you have to donate) and no money at all; in fact you will probably end up having to pay for all the things you need to do the job. Some VVAW chapters have, at various times, been able to act as a vets referral service because potential employers have gotten in touch with us to find vets.

For some VVAW members in the past their VVAW work has been a recommendation to a job as a professional vet: that's why many vet outreach centers, various college vets affairs offices, state and federal vet jobs are often occupied by VVAW members, past and present. For some years, during and after the war, a veteran who wanted to do something for other vets had few places to turn and VVAW was one of them. The American Legion and VFW had not yet figured out that their futures would depend on attracting Vietnam veterans, and there weren't other Vietnam vet groups. VVAW offered not only the comradeship of other vets, but such programs as the first of what would become post traumatic stress rap groups. And so, a vet activist might well have VVAW on his record.

Finally, if you're looking for a good place to drink cheap beer and trade war stories, VVAW can't afford halls or bartenders. We have downed a beer or two and we have traded a few war stories (some of them true); in fact, if you've got a few war stories you would like to tell, send them to THE VETERAN for "Recollections." And cheap beer? Well, at the last Chicago chapter fund-raising party, planned to raise money to help send some vets to Nicaragua, not only did people bring their own beer, but then VVAW sold it back to them!

While there are many things VVAW cannot do for you, there are some vital things that we can do. And we do them well.

VVAW has always been in the lead in telling and showing vets that we were not to blame for Vietnam. We didn't send ourselves to Vietnam; we never had anything to gain from that war. Look instead at the government and the corporations which profit, in some way or another, from wars like Vietnam and then put the blame squarely where it belongs. When VVAW had a demonstration, we would tell the media or anyone else who would listen who was to blame for the war. Among veterans' groups that set us apart.

And, at a time when Vietnam vets were considered crazy or dangerous or just too spaced out to be taken seriously, VVAW was raising as much noise as possible about care for Vietnam vets and our particular problems. VVAW chapters seized offices of VA officials to demand proper treatment for all vets, especially Vietnam vets; we lobbied Congressmen, we talked and we shouted. The VA always knew we were around and that we were watching them.

VVAW members are at their best using the experience of Vietnam to do what we can do to prevent another Vietnam.

And any project that VVAW is involved in will go better with additional members. Especially involved members, though we certainly realize that not everyone has the time or the interest to get involved in all of our activities. Fifty people writing a letter to a particular Congressman about why we shouldn't give aid to the CIA-sponsored "contras" in Nicaragua means more than 30 people: that's just simple arithmetic. One hundred vets at a Veterans Day ceremony better underlines Vietnam vets' concerns about future Vietnams than do 75 vets. Again, it's just arithmetic. And VVAW needs your help. In fact, we all need all the help we can get since it is not likely that anyone else is going to do the things that need to be done--just look at the articles in this paper to see how the U.S. government is treating vets and how it's dealing with the rest of the world.

Joining VVAW will make you a part of the effort to use our experience and our credibility to change how that government functions. When our experience lets us talk to one high school student and change his or her mind about the military, we've taken a step forward. When we can confront the recruiters who would send our children off to do the same things we did, only in Central America instead of Vietnam, we've taken another big step. A picket line outside a movie glorifying war and the macho-military image is still another step, as is sending a delegation of veterans to Nicaragua to show that we support their efforts to determine the future of their own country without U.S. intervention or dictation.

We want you to become a part of all these things either with your support or, better, with your self and your family. We need to know that the things we are saying, in THE VETERAN or elsewhere, represent the ideas and positions of many Vietnam veterans; we need to know that the actions we carry on have the support of you and others.

There's a membership application form in the newspaper. If you want more copies, let us know. If you are already a member, find someone else--perhaps the person who now reads THE VETERAN when you're done with it. If you live in one of the places where VVAW does not now have a chapter, let us know: there may well be other groups in the area who are pursuing some of the same or similar activities. Or we might know of other vets in the vicinity who have similar interests and want to get involved.

Fifteen years ago there were some 2000 Vietnam vets who took part in some or all of Operation Dewey Canyon III in Washington; since that time we're heard from at least 10 times that number who were "there" for the event. And that is fine because it shows that many vets who were not there for whatever reason still believe that the medals were thrown away in part for them--and they are right. And if there are few activities today as striking as was Dewey Canyon III, VVAW is still just as involved in working for vets and for freedom from more Vietnams. Join up. We need your help.

Vietnam Vets Bring New Meaning to Old Day
VETERANS' DAY

Photo by M Langenfeld

On November 11, 1985, the Madison Chapter of VVAW held its annual Veterans Day ceremony in the state Capitol Rotunda.

The unique ceremony paid tribute to all who have served in wars and strongly emphasized wars' effects on people's lives, the consequences to individuals, families, communities and the nation as a whole.

Over the past three years, since its inception, the VVAW ceremony at the Capitol has developed its own traditions which have been appreciated by vets and civilians alike for their originality and their dramatic effect on the participants. To the beat of a drum an honor guard of four veterans enters the Rotunda, half stepping, carrying a stretcher. A green body bag lies atop the litter. A woman follows the body bag, solemnly carrying a folded American flag. The litter is placed in the middle of the Rotunda for all to view and absorb. The flag is unfolded and carefully draped over the body bag, and the ceremony begins.

A large candle is lighted behind the flag-draped litter, to remember those who, while serving, lost their lives or pieces of their bodies or minds forever. The lighted candle also symbolized the hope that we hold for each MIA & POW, the hope that not another family will ever have to suffer knowing that a loved one is missing or a prisoner of war; and to symbolize the hope that the day may come when there will be no more veterans and no more wars, forever.

Poetry, letters and reflections of people who were in some way touched by war were read; they included Chief Joseph's surrender speech from the Indian wars; a letter from a surviving child of Heroshima, read by a 3rd grade student; letters from German soldiers in Stalingrad relayed by a World War II combat veteran. Poetry and letters from combat nurses and active-duty GI's to families back home brought nods, bowed heads and tears from those in attendance. Letters to parents about dead sons, poetry from wives to veteran husbands, all brought home the tremendous grief and loss suffered by those touched by war. One of the final readings was a letter written by a GI in Lebanon; it had arrived one day after his body was sent home to his family.

Interspersed throughout the ceremony was soft, lilting music provided by Muriel Hogan performing "Fields of Flanders," and Joe McDonald, doing the haunting "Colors for Susan"' written in loving memory of those who have died. Joe also performed "War Hero" which contributed greatly in setting the mood and the message of our ceremony.

Silently the honor guard moves toward the flag-draped body bag and the flag bearer unfurls a black taffeta drape which is placed over the bag. Taps echoes throughout the rotunda and the honor guard raise red roses in clenched fists in final salute to America's war dead. The honor guard turns and places their roses on the flag as Jim Wachtendonk begins the familiar words of "Where Have All the Flowers Gone." Participants who have filled the Rotunda, flow past the litter singing, some crying, to place the flowers they have brought on the flag-drpaed body bag. The message is complete.

VVAW's Veterans' Day ceremony in Madison draws in the participants; it allows them to reflect and contemplate the price we all pay as a society when words fail and guns must be taken up. The one common thread which binds all those men and women who have been touched by war is the desire for peace. We want people to think about the effects of war and be inspired to go out and work toward peace. It is very effective and very powerful.

Our ceremony went far beyond those in attendance at the Rotunda. This year, for the first time, our local listener-sponsored radio station, WORT, did a live broadcast from the Capitol which went out to all of South Central Wisconsin, and directly to the local VA Hospital over their P.A. system. It was another VVAW first that was greatly appreciated along with the flowers from the ceremony which were distributed in the VA. "Thanks for thinking of us," said the brothers in the wards; "It's easy to forget that we're still here."

Sukie Wachtendonk
--VVAW Madison

Georgia VVAW RAMBO RILES VETS

Athens, GA--Protesting the distortion of Hollywood-style combat, VVAW members and friends carried signs and handed out literature at the showing of Sylvester Stallone's film in which the actor is portrayed *single-handedly wiping out a* Vietnamese Army and its Russian advisors.

"Rambo exploits emotions about the MIA/POW problem and presents a totally unreal picture of war," said Elton Manxione, VVAW Regional Coordinator and organizer of the picket.

"It's Easy To Be A Hero When The Only People Shooting Are The Camera Crew" read his sign.

Elton, like other VVAW members, does not want young Americans to think war and killing are fun and games. So Elton, other VVAW members and local rap-group members hit the street to protest this latest in a series of grotesque misinformation about the Vietnam War and its aftermath.

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VETERANS DAY. . . MAYOR WASHINGTON HONORED SPEAKER

Virg McFadden presents award to Mayor Washington. Maude DeVictor at left. Photo by Maureen Dolan

Chicago--VVAW held 11AM Veterans Day ceremonies at the Vietnam Veteran Memorial Fountain in relatively pleasant weather compared with previous years.

Mayor Harold Washington announced the appointment of Maude DeVictor as Veteran Liaison to his office. He presented Maude, who made a brief speech; the Mayor then led the wreath-laying ceremony.

Keynote speaker was Mr Anthony Guarisco, International Director of the International Alliance of Atomic Veterans.

Other speakers were Dr David Curry, former Vet Center Director; Bill Davis, VVAW National Coordinator; Roger Lautt, former therapist in PSTD alcohol/drug abuse program; and our much loved Father Bob Bosse. Singers, Rita Passage, performed.

The well-attended ceremony drew the supportive presence of Ron Kovic as well as members of the Freeze, CISPES, VVA and VietNow.

An informal soup and sandwich luncheon was served at the Chicago Coordinator's home following the ceremony.

--Virg McFadden
VVAW Chicago

Malcolm X 1926-1965

We see where the problem of Vietnam is the problem of the oppressed and the oppressor. The problem in the Congo is the problem of the oppressed and the oppressor. The problem in Mississippi and Alabama and New York is the problem of the oppressed and the oppressor. The oppressed people all over the world have the same problems and it is only now that they're becoming sufficiently sophisticated to see that all they have to do to get the oppressor off their backs is to unite and realize that it is one problem – that our problems are inseparable. And then our action will be inseparable. Our action will be one of unity and in the unity of oppressed people is actually the strength, and the best strength, of the oppressed people.

Malcolm X, January 1965

February 25

San Antonio NOT ALLOWED TO MARCH

Veterans Day, 1985, and once again VVAW was not allowed to join in the "patriotic ceremony." According to Chester Konkolewski, president of the Veterans of Greater San Antonio, "They just did not belong in a patriotic ceremony. People who are against the war are not patriotic." We were accepted by vets from all over Texas who came to San Antonio for the "Last Patrol" (an all-Texas activity of Vietnam vets).

When given a choice to march in the parade as individuals or not at all, the membership of VVAW rejected anything other than marching as an anti-war vets organization--VVAW.

We didn't make an issue of the "Last Patrol" having been done in 1972 (VVAW's convoy from all over the country to Miami Beach for the Republican convention in 1972 was named the "Last Patrol")--I guess we're finally not "last" anymore. There was much talk about some of the focus of the new "Last Patrol's" issues: POW/MIA's, and a Texas Vietnam Vet Memorial.

San Antonio, having a large military and retired military preserve has much concern for the MIA issue; however, we feel much of the energy of this issue is being used for "Vietnam bashing" and a lame attempt to finally justify the war. We asked the questions: "If the Vietnamese are holding POW's as 'hostages' for whatever reason, wouldn't it be in their interest to say so and make their demands?" "Wasn't the POW/MIA issue used to prolong the war in the first place, creating more POW's/MIA's?" "Why is the U.S. government dragging its feet in accepting the invitation to establish a liaison office for MIA's in Vietnam?"

We questioned the value of another statue/memorial--"Who needs it?" "I don't remember any of my dead brothers telling me 'I hope I get a statue' while they were dying, but I do remember the words, 'Goddam Nixon--Goddam this fucking war." How about living memorials?

After the days of vet activities here in San Antonio, one of the vets with a group from Dallas stopped me and said, "I want to apologize--I felt hostile to VVAW at first but after seeing how you work and hearing what you say, I understand you really are brothers."

Tom Wetzler
San Antonio
VVAW

JUNGLE SHIRT BOOGIE ON A CONCRETE PLANE

fast steppin'
side street walkin'
away from the
noise
and insanity
side street thinkin'
drill sergeant's hat down
low
shades the
eyes
jungle boot
rocking
with the movement
of my feet
stayin' cool inside
jungle shirt
many pockets
o.d. green
side street trippin'
people staring
yet avoiding
my eyes
what the hell is that?
(their eyes scream)
I live on top of
a mountain
(my thoughts reply)
can't you tell?
with sheath knife
and honing stone
montagnard bracelet and
jungle fatigues
watchin' the buzzard's
flight
or laying on the
cool
green
earth
with many thousand
flowers
can you?
Or
standing
facing
the raging wind
jungle shirt tails
flying
have you ever gone out
and hugged
the fog
as it drifted
past your home
have you?
down here
in this
insanity?
these are
my thoughts
while I
jungle shirt boogie
on a
concrete
plane.

Steve Hassna
1978

Madison,
TV AIRS REAL EXPERIENCES

The VVAW Madison Chapter got a call from the University of Wisconsin History Department where a professor was giving a class on Vietnam. He told me that the students wanted to hear the facts of Vietnam as Vietnam veterans experienced it. Everybody but me was busy or out of town that night, so I packed up my guitar and a load of VETERANS and headed down to campus to cover the class.

It had been some time since I'd done a school. The lecture pit was filled with students, anxious to learn and listen. Many had uncles or brothers who served in country. My being with them, answering their questions and singing my recollections enabled them to put into perspective their relatives involvement or lack of involvement with the world. After the gig was over about 50 students came up to the lecture table and just wanted to talk. The VETERAN newspapers I'd brought were gone in a flash and there seemed to be a mutual respect for me as well as the opinions I represented.

* * * *

Michael Hersh is an award-winning TV producer from Los Angeles. He is also a Vietnam vet. PBS gave Michael a grant to do any project he wanted. He chose the war he served in and wanted to direct its content to "Vietnam vets and those who should care." After a call to the University of Wisconsin chancelor for permission to film on Madison's campus, he was told of the Vietnam class being offered at the University. Madison's history of antiwar resistance was well known by Mike Hersh, so his idea was to bring the vet back on campus for the filming. Mike spoke to the teacher who directed him to the teacher who directed him to VVAW. It wasn't too much longer and Mike was in my livingroom wanting to hear the music I had played at UW. He was interested in reaching strictly Vietnam vets with his production. He was in need of contacts; we furnished him with these and more.

As it happened the night he was at my home (office) VVAW was meeting with the Madison school board arranging the demise of recruiters at Madison schools. We talked until 4 AM and when Mike Hersh left Madison that morning he had more ammo than he had expected. The contacts we had supplied, the music he intended to use, the poetry of Steve Hassna, all gave credence to the ability of VVAW to participate in the healing of old wounds. Here was the passing on of our personal histories to a younger group so that our misfortunes might not be repeated.

The night of the concert, Charlie Haid (Renko, of "Hill Street Blues") announced and set the stage for the evening when he attacked the image of Rambo as a non-vet making megabucks off a lie. (Haid wore his VVAW button proudly, proclaiming that VVAW was his vets organization since 1971 when he marched in Dewey Canyon III.) The pavilion was packed with both young and old, vets and student vets, ROTC and curious civilians. Everybody learned something--it was impossible not to. The wounds of the Vietnam War remain; the lessons need to be taught, and the best teachers for that are ourselves.

--Jim Wachtendonk
VVAW Madison

New Jersey,
MARCH AGAINST APARTHEID

VVAW has supported the struggle in South Africa for years. Above we donated fatigues to guerrillas in 1977.

Over 9000 New Jerseyans participated in a mass protest rally and march in Newark, NJ on November 9, 1985 to proclaim their opposition to the racist system of apartheid in South Africa.

The rally, which was initiated by District 65 of the United Auto Workers, drew people from all over the state and included labor, religious, community and student groups, and a contingent of NY/NJ VVAW members.

Clarence Fitch, NY/NJ coordinator for VVAW was a local organizer for the rally and member of the statewide coalition steering committee. He commented, "We realized that after this demonstration, South Africa would not be free the same night, be we were trying to make people aware of the demands to end all economic, diplomatic, cultural and political support of South Africa and I think we accomplished that end."

VVAW has a history of participating in the anti-apartheid struggle and will continue to do so as long as the racist regime in South Africa remains in power.

This rally was just the beginning of future efforts to raise consciousness of people who are not aware of the deplorable conditions that exist half a world away.

The situation in South Africa has gotten progressively worse in the last year. Thousands of people have died to protest the unjust system and the country has become ungovernable; it will likely remain that way until South Africa is free.

The struggle must continue in this country as well. Supporters of Reagan's sham "constructive engagement" must be made aware that this policy does not work and is unacceptable.

AFRICA MUST AND WILL BE FREE!

NY/NJ VVAW

"The War Toy Song"
--Dennis Kroll

I don't want my sons to play with guns,
And I don't want your daughters to patch him up;
I don't want those war toys on your shelves;
Send it all to Washington and build another wall.

Hey mister, that's no toy to buy your boy,
M-16's with ammo clips won't bring him any joy;
And don't buy your son that GI Joe,
If there's another Vietnam would you want him to go?

And when your son goes out to play
With his toy grenade;
Tell him young men who played for real,
Aren't marching in anyone's parades.

KNOW THE ENEMY
and know yourself;
in 100 battles
you will never
be imperiled.
sun tzu

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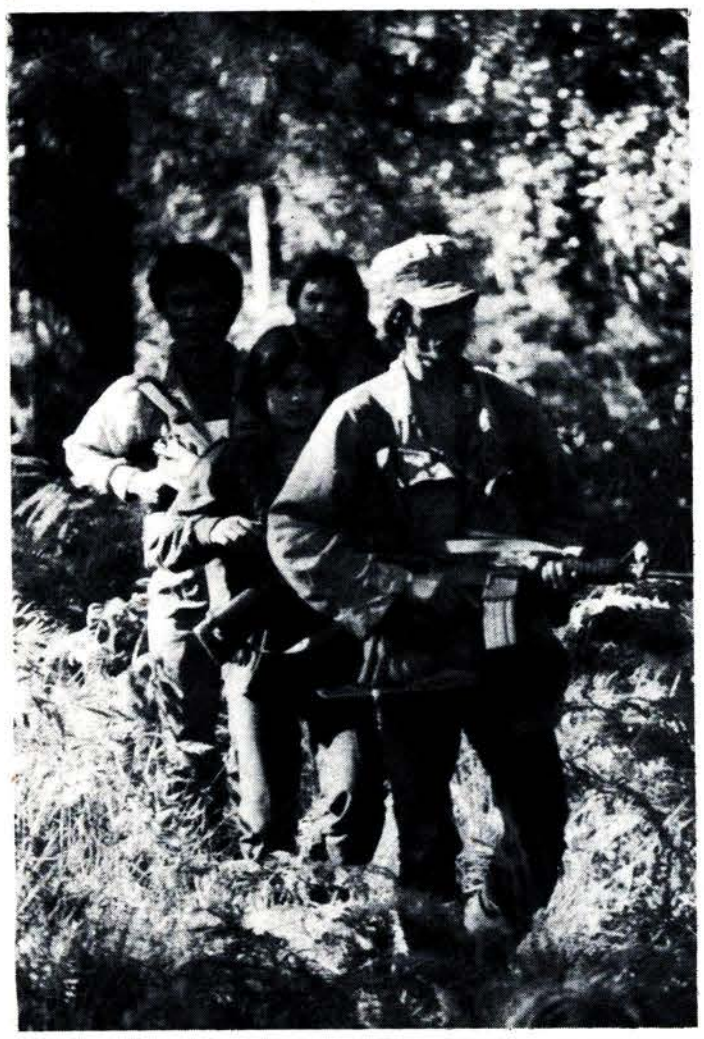
First Hand Account

WITH THE NPA IN THE PHILIPPINES



Photos by Zoltan Grossman

The battle-hardened guerrilla thinks of his next move. Deep within the forest, he is facing an opponent with nearly equal skill and determination as he, one false move on either one's part can mean the end. The guerrilla has chosen to encircle his opponent, flanking him now on both sides. He makes his move. His bishop takes a pawn. "Check."

These are the guerrillas of the New People's Army (NPA) of the Philippines, who, between battles, hone their military tactics on the chessboard. To them, the mock warfare between plastic rooks and pawns is more than a game. Pointing to the king, one laughs, "This is the dictator." To make up for their relative weakness in firepower, the rebels say, they need to have superior brainpower. Indeed, if the NPA fighters fight half as well as many of them play chess, the regime of President Ferdinand Marcos is in serious trouble.

I am in a NPA base camp high in the Cordillera Mountains of northern Luzon Island, 275 kilometers north of Manila. I am spending a week in the guerrilla zone which extends throughout much of the homeland of the Igorot tribal peoples. The Igorots, like the other "national minorities" who make up 10% of the population, are Filipinos who resisted conquest and cultural assimilation throughout the Spanish, American and Japanese colonial eras. Today they are fighting giant development projects funded by multinational corporations and agencies and are being joined by the NPA, the armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP).

The Igorots are famed for their sophisticated system of rice terraces. Concentrated in the valley of the Chico River, the terraces form enormous steps, each anywhere from 5 to 60 feet high. An intricate irrigation network has been maintained by hand, in some areas for over a millenium. Hiking on the terraces, one often comes across old women and men, smoking pipes as they tend the paddies. Along the Chico it is as if a painter brushed the steep hillsides an unforgettable bright green. Without the sustenance of the terraces, the Igorots would have to rely solely on their slash-and-burn agricultural plots and the outside market, including dancing for tourists who flock to the region.

It is for this reason that the Igorots were alarmed when, in

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'The Wall'

OUR MEMORIAL

It was Sunday morning at 3 AM and I was pondering about going to "The Wall," our memorial in Washington, DC. Lying there my inner voice struck me saying "Go" accompanied by a secure self-assured feeling that the trip would be personally rewarding. I would find my meaning at "The Wall." Hermann Hesse's "Journey to the East" came to mind and it came to me that this trip would be an extrapolation of my Vietnam experience. That is, I had to go.

On Memorial Day 1985 I began my trek to "The Wall." Walking down Pennsylvania Avenue I encountered a Vietnamese couple hawking souvenirs at a sidewalk street site. Flashback to Saigon! It was hot and humid which emphasized my flashback. I enjoyed the heat and the humidity like I did in Saigon in '68.

Not knowing where the memorial site was, I stopped a couple. The man wore a bush hat so I knew he was a vet. "Down past the Washington monument," he told me. I continued my trek in heightened anticipation. I passed the Washington monument and veered toward the right. I heard cannon shots and began to count them. I was beginning to see more guys in jungle fatigues so I knew I was getting close. I heard voices over a loud speaker accompanied by somber music and I was there. A crowd gathered along a roped-off portion awaiting the ceremonies.

After a few moments of reflection, I remembered the "Three Sentries" and saw that I could get close. At the base of the statue lay wreaths, flowers, etc and behind the ammo belt of the one carrying the M-60 was a picture of a child. A boy who undoubtedly lost his father. The "Three Sentries" stare out over the Memorial as if they are protecting the sacredness of the grounds. It was beautiful.

As the tour bus came to a stop outside the Lincoln Memorial, my inner voice said, "This bus isn't going to start" as it came to a halt. "Back in 15 minutes," the driver said. With video equipment in hand I headed back to "The Wall." A very good friend of mine, Matt Cestaric, lost his father, Joseph Cestaric, in Vietnam. I promised Matt I'd find him. I looked at my watch and it was time to leave and not having completed my mission, to find Joseph Cestaric's name on the wall, again I vowed to return.

In front of the "Three Sentries" is what appears to be the walkway to the wall. However, it is chained off after a few yards , apparently intending to be a holding area for visitors to wait their turn with the "Sentries." I walked down the walkway and was surprised to find myself cut short. Another visitor also deceived by the false walkway, said "Hold it! This doesn't go anywhere." The symbolism between his statement and our involvement in Vietnam hit me. "Perfect to describe the Vietnam War," I thought.

Walking out of the false entry or ambush, I encountered a book which I knew listed the names in alphabetical order and their location. I came to Joseph Cestaric, MSGT, Panel 4E, line 20. Walking west to east I came to the center point which begins in 1959. I counted down 4 panels and began looking for his name. Not finding it, I counted lines and hoped he'd be there. What I saw stunned me. Adjacent to Joseph Cestaric is Francis Buckley; not a relative but nevertheless my last name. Our names together on the wall! I stared for minutes not believing what I saw. The urge to lose it was coming over me. I felt like falling on the ground and spilling my guts for the dead, missing, maimed and myself, but for some reason I maintained. "It's here," I thought. The magic that lends sacredness to a memorial.

From the center of the wall I stared out at the sentries. I looked to the bronze, yet "life like tribute for strength and found it. Walking westward, towards the "real world," I realized that the same emotional development that got me through 'Nam, the ability to ignore the horror and the surrealness of the whole situation again surfaced. However, maybe I should have flowed with my emotions. Maybe I should have let everyone know how angry and frustrated I was/am living in a situation which is real life surrealism. Light is dark and dark is light. Accomplish your objectives but don't ask what your objectives are. Die for your country but don't ask why. Live through a year or more of terror, ecstacy, where North Vietnamese regulars, Viet Cong, my mama-san and even GI's put rifle rounds through my hootch. Smile by day and try to kill you at night. Kill you by day and smile at night.

They got Joe Cestaric and 58,000 others in that war/non-war. Myself and millions of others dodged the sabotage then but still carry it with us now. The question is "who sabotaged whom?"

Nevertheless fellow Vietnam vets, "The Wall" will take you back. Back to the 'Nam. I swear you can smell it and feel it. You may be here but you're still there. Some may still be there, but at "The Wall" we are all home.

--Jeff Buckley
Edmonds, WA

With the NPA Guerrillas in the Phi

"WE JOIN TO RECOVE

the mid-1970's, the Martial Law government went ahead with plans to dam the Chico, to provide electricity to lowland industries. Financed partly by the World Bank, the plans called for relocating the Igorots from their flooded lands to government camps. The Bontoc and Kalinga tribal village councils talked with authorities to no avail. As a woman elder said to me in the Bontoc village of Belwang, "Land is life...Kabunian (God) gave this land to us for us to use, not for other individuals or countries....Even our blood will flow over this land before it is grabbed. Let them come....We would die for our ancestral lands."

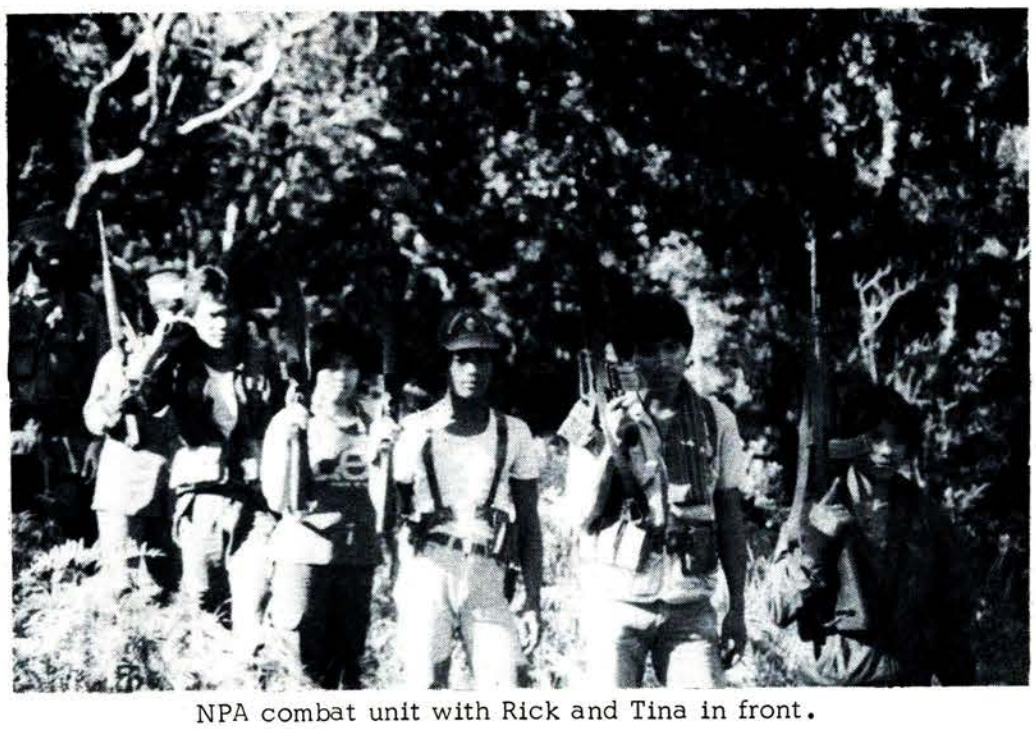
Igorot women have the distinction among other tribes in the world of being able to own and inherit land. With the phasing-out of intertribal warfare and the diminished stature of male warriors, the women have played an increasingly vocal political role within the villages. Whereas before the wives could only influence through their husbands, they now freely interrupt or reprimand the male elders.

The engineers arrived to build the dam; village women disrobed in front of some to shame them. Others were killed and their camps burned. The military retaliated harshly, and *in desperation*, the Igorots say, they turned to the NPA. Until that time, the NPA had little presence in the area; one male fighter had married a local woman to integrate into the culture. But then the process of recruitment began the result of which is, today, a regional NPA which is, from my observations, at least 90% tribal.

Over the same period of time, Igorot elders, youth and professionals drew together to openly call for tribal rights, culminating in 1984 with the formation of the Cordillera People's Alliance, led by Atty. William Claver. Faced with the combination of ecological protest and insurgency, the government has at least temporarily shelved its plan for the dams.

The degree of local sympathy for the NPA can be seen in the militia training camp which is on the other side of the valley. Forty local kids train in a two-week course; all came under the guidance of their parents. The weapons they train with testify to the arms shortage the NPA faces: three U.S.-made Armalites, Springfield rifles from the war against the Spanish and Americans, a few M-1's, an air gun, wooden mock rifle, and a beautifully carved homemade .22. "Our weapons are not the most important thing," a militia leader says; "Political unity comes before the armed struggle. Why fight if you don't know what you're fighting for and against?"

Every morning the students go through a rigorous calisthenics session designed to build the climbing muscles. They are divided into three age groups--from 12 to 22--and particularly seem to relish dashing to hide in the trees upon the warning of "helicopter!" During one session, an NPA medical team passes through the camp headed west; a militia leader points out a man smoking a cigarette who lost his young son when the military raided his home.



NPA combat unit with Rick and Tina in front.

All political/military instruction at the camp is conducted by three NPA regulars in the Bontoc-Kankanaey language of the students. In one night class, the NPA instructor outlines how the village militia backs up the NPA, defends the village and its internal security. In between lessons the class sings traditional songs, but with reworded verses about the dams, the military and the U.S. An older instructor, Ka Delfin ("Ka" is short for "kasama," meaning "companion" or "comrade") sings the tribal lyrical poem called the "ulalim" which echoes hauntingly through the woods, mixing with the songs of the forest birds.

The alliance between the NPA and the tribes is personified in a very unusual priest. Father Conrado Balweg is a member of the Tinggian tribe from Abra Province. He is also the best-known guerrilla commander in the entire country.

In 1972, Balweg was a young parish priest who combinea the Catholic mass with Tinggian rituals. Confession became a collective affair, planting and harvesting celebrations were held in the ricefields, and the tribal ways of sharing were encouraged as "Christianity in practice."

The same year the Cellophil Resources Corp (CRC) began a gargantuan logging operation in Abra, restricting Tinggian access to wide swaths of the forest. Under new decrees, the tribe became squatters on their own ancestral lands. Balweg and his parishioners delivered pronouncements against the project, but as Balweg says, "The bishop just kept his mouth shut ....the old folks were being imprisoned, the houses were being burnt, the ricefields that were ready for harvest were being bulldozed--and no moral rponouncement yet from the church."

For his activities Balweg was accused of being an NPA sympathizer though he claims he had never met the rebels. After receiving many death threats, in 1979 he fled to the hills and joined the NPA. "We could no longer continue with our services, our education, so what should we do?" he asks; "Should we surrender?...The people should really stand on their own and build their society, their community....It was very clear to me that the church is the business of the people."

Ka Rick is also a Tinggian from Abra; though quiet and reserved, he is recognized hands-down as the most captivating singer in Balweg's combat unit. During tense periods his soothing voice can often be heard from thick moss and trees intoning revolutionary ballads. As a translator and youth organizer in Abra, he was shot near the hip by a government agent. "I grabbed the gun barrel," he says, "so it couldn't discharge again. That's why I'm alive today." After weeks in the hospital, he joined the NPA. Today, he walks with a slight limp behind the other fighers and wears a cross made out of two spent M-16 casings.

The relationship between lowland and highland Filipinos is critical to the grand chess game in the country. In some countries, tribal peoples have been armed by foreign governments to combat other nationlist armies of the Left. The Montagnards of Indochina, the Khoi-khoi tribes in Namibia, and the Miskito Indians of Nicaragua have all had their populations divided over support for revolutionary movements. *Why has the situation* developed in the Cordillera more like that in Guatemala or Chile where indigenous peoples are joining the Left en masse?

One answer can be found in the program of the National Democratic Front (NDF) of which both the CPP and NPA are members. It calls for the "right of self-determination" for the "national minorities" such as the Igorots, and the Islamic Moro peoples of Mindanao. Self-determination, the NDF stresses, is necessary if the tribes are to join the other sectors of society: workers, peasants and students, in a democratic coalition government. Ka Jun, a CPP regional officer stationed at Balweg's camp claims that the NDF program goes beyond the "autonomy" offered in existing socialist countries, allowing the tribes a veto power over any resource development project.

NPA fighter sporting cap captured from National police in combat.

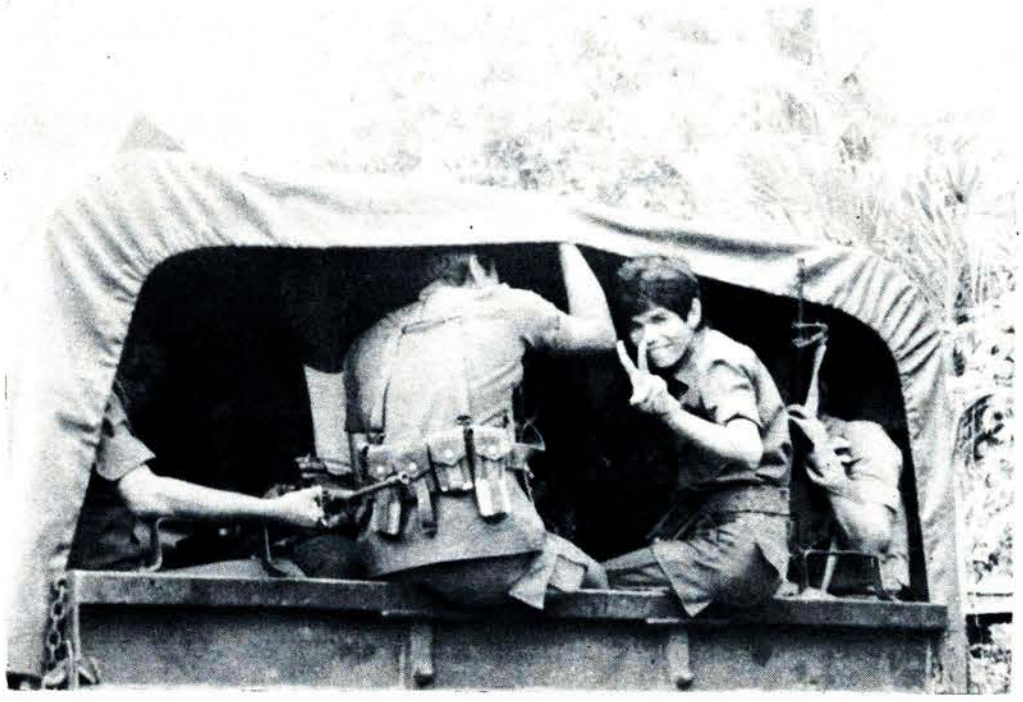
ilippines:

ER OUR WAYS"

The Igorots I have spoken with want to stay part of the Philippines and accept small-scale resource and technical development appropriate to their cultures. Balweg says, "The consciousness of our people in the Cordillera is we are Filipinos, but at the same time we have a different history apart from the rest of the Filipino people....Our people, the minorities here in the Cordillera, have always been the collective master of their society. And it's not for any outsider to destroy...Anybody who would not respect this, they have to confront it....So it is up to them (the NDF) to prove that we respect each other, and we unite." A Kankanaey student in the underground put it to me more bluntly: "At times there were problems--the lowland cadre didn't understand us as a nation....It's impractical for us to fight alone, but we have to be respected. We don't want mistakes made here like in Nicaragua."

Most Filipino leftists agree that avoiding these "mistakes" means understanding the tribal cultures, respecting their integrity, and defending them as living, developing cultures rather than relics of the past. They do respect the tribes' closeness to the land, and how they have fought to protect it. Activists often stress what they see as the positive aspects of the societies, such as the "communal" system of labor exchange. "Marxism is basically the philosphy of the elimination of oppression of man over man," says Balweg. "It coincides to a great degree with the present stage of the minority wherein the communal life is very strong. Class society is not yet developed.... So in that way it is very similar."

Among some Christian and Marxist activists in the Cordillera, one can detect the kind of romanticization of Western science that is common in a colonized nation. While they oppose large scale projects such as dams and nuclear plants, there is sometimes an air of condescension toward the "pagan superstitions" that are atill strong in the villages. This criticism often barely mentions the poor track record of Western science toward nature, or the "material basis" for many so-called superstitions (though NPA medics do use herbal medicines). Balweg, for example, emphasizes scientific education--that a poor harvest may be caused by mice rather than angry gods. Yet he opposes eliminating any tribal beliefs. While MPA members at times seem uncritical of Western thought, they seem to have enough respect for the tribes not to impose their beliefs.



Look familiar? Army troops flash Peace sign.

One story brought up by many Ingorots concerns a large red bird called the "kuling." Igorot lore holds that if the kuling flies over and sings a certain way, it can be interpreted as a good or bad omen. Upon seeing the kuling, some NPA militia members would refuse to go any further. Some who did proceed were ambushed, "proving" the belief correct. So the NPA had long meetings on what to do about "that bird." While some fighters ridiculed the whole idea, others tried to explain experiences they had after seeing the kuling. Perhaps, some said, the soldiers had frightened the bird into flight. Balweg urged the fighters to respect the culture even if they disagreed with it. He tells his own story: "We were in a barrio when the military came...For their own safety the elders retreated with us ....All around us we were surrounded, bombs were dropping nearby. It was very tense. And in the midst of all this, the elders stood aside and held a small ritual. They were talking with the birds...It was very touching."

One night at dinner, over rice and dried fish served in the main camp tent, Balweg is talking to me about the traditional religion of the Igorots. Ka Jun taps us both on the shoulders. With a worried expression he tells us that "We are in a military situation." Hundreds of government troops have been flown in by helicopter to nearby towns; and two task forces totaling nearly 90 soldiers are moving in a pincer motion converging on the area. Balweg confers with his unit and gives the order: "Let them hit air." "They are trying to provoke a confrontation to find us," he says; "We won't give it to them."

That night some of the guerrillas sit around the campfire to sing and tell stories and jokes to alleviate the tension. Perhaps indicating the increasing distance of the CPP from China, Ka Jun tells "Chinese jokes." One comments on the current Chinese leader and his policies of commercialism, represented by the sale of Coca-Cola: "It's the real Deng." Other jokes focus on the Maoist era: Ka Victor, an NPA for 15 years, was in China in the 1960's, seeing what he describes as "both positive and negative aspects."

Though alert, the guerrillas face the situation calmly. I tell Ka Jun that I had expected the NPA's to be a bunch of tough guys who would talk with cigarettes in their mouths and spit through their teeth. "We do recruit some tough guys," he laughs, "but they mellow out after joining." I have to admit the idea of someone "mellowing out" after joining an armed revolutionary organization hasn't occurred to me before. Yet the entire time in the guerrilla zone, I never hear a voice raised in anger, nor an M-16 brandished to prove one's manhood.

Over the next three days I observe perhaps some of the reasons for the confident air about the NPA's. Though the government troops are approaching the vicinity, they have no guide and have lost any element of surprise. At all times we know where the soldiers are, how many there are, what they are asking the villagers, even what they are eating. Villagers constantly watch the soldiers in the woods, and send runners up to the camp with messages as well as rice supplies. One village violates its own taboo--of people entering or leaving during a sacred day--to provide this service.

One runner is roughly questioned by the soldiers, but keeps his message tacked away in his armpit. Another messenger wears the thick grass rain cape of the Igorot elders. Ka Lucas, a 77-year-old Kalinga elder at the camp who was a guerrilla during World War II is the Political Officer of his village militia. He joined because of experiences with the military in his barrio including men being tied to banana trees and tortured. "Our customs and traditional ways are being destroyed," he says. "We join to recover our way ...which is part of our inheritance from our ancestors."

One of the last major battles to take place in this area was about two months ago when the NPA raided the municipality of Sadanga. According to the account of the residents, shooting started at the town hall (the pockmarks of which are still visible). In the midst of the gunbattle, a woman in a nearby house was giving birth. Balweg ordered a ceasefire while the family removed the mother and newborn infant, and then quickly forced the government soldiers to surrender. One local fighter today sports a military cap that he seized that day; and the baby was named "Conrado."

It is this type of incident that gives the NPA a Robin Hood image in the Cordillera and other Philippine regions. To throw off eavesdroppers, Filipinos can variously refer to the NPA as the "Nice People Around," "No Permanent Address," or, for priests like Balweg, "No Parish Assignment." The CPP is also sometimes called "Colgate-Palmolive Philippines."

"It was never we who would directly recruit," says Balweg, "but the community....And they always say "Do not surrender! And do not do anything that would shame your tribe!" He claims that villagers help the family of an NPA recruit with their harvesting and house-building.

This relationship between the guerrillas and villagers had not always been so close. "It used to be that the people would give us supplies because they were afraid of our guns," says Balweg, "So we now have a rule that we pay fairly for everything." (The money comes not from foreign governments, but from an elaborate "taxation" system;

Continued From page II

Philippines

corporations operating in the vicinity pay up or face destruction of their equipment. Even CRC has to pay; logging operations have been suspended in some regions by the government to stem this form of fundraising).

Ka Victor also mentions an error the NPA made in the early 1970's when it carried out a major campaign against feudalism which advocated the collectivization of land. "There was only one small problem with that, he says; "There is no feudalism in the Cordillera. The land is already collective and the people told us so. We changed that one in a hurry."

With the more recent popularity of the NPA, the military has placed a 200,000 peso ($12,000) price on Balweg's head, but he seems unconcerned. When last year, Defense Minister Juan Ponce Enrile sent a personal message to the NPA Commander, requesting a meeting where he could convince Balweg to unconditionally surrender, Balweg publicly replied, "Catch me if you can."

"It's not hard to intimidate the soldiers," says Balweg. "Once when they came close, we threw rocks and yelled 'grandad!' (grenade). They ran away screaming for their mothers." He says that some soldiers "are realizing they are just pawns," and are providing information and even ammunition to the NPA. The regime will find it difficult to win at chess if indeed the "pawns" opt out.

Ka Tina, an 18-year-old Kalinga, is one of the three women in the combat unit. Because of the male warrior tradition of the Igorots, fewer women join the NPA in Cordillera than in other regions. Tina left home four years ago, originally against her parents' will, but later with a "mutual understanding." She has been in a number of ambushes and once escaped from an encirclement by government troops. She concurs with Balweg that these soldiers are not so brave in the field, and are especially shocked to be facing women rebels.

On the third day of the military offensive, the guerillas meet at dawn to prepare for a retreat. The military has been sighted one and a half kilometers away, and mortar shelling has been heard. Tina is standing wrapped in a blanket near Balweg, who for brief moments tightens his face muscles and for the first time looks like a hunted man. He is to head seven others in a stay-behind group which will protect the camp while the rest establish a new camp further up the mountain.

It is a beautiful morning as we climb the dry ridge, knee-deep in grass, camouflaging our backpacks with branches to avoid detection. Leading this group is Pedro Dungoc, a Kalinga from the village of Bugnay. After a half-hour of silent climbing, we hear in the distance seven shots from an Armalite, and bursts of M-60 fire. "They're clearing the forest ahead of their advance," says Dongoc, shaking his head; "A waste of ammunition."

Dungoc, known as Ka AG (Aboveground) was, before 1981, an organizer against the dam project. He was seen as a deputy to Macli-ing Dulag, a pangat (traditional elder) who was considered the foremost leader in the tribal fight against the dam. When officials presented Dulag with papers stating government ownership of tribal lands, he stated: "How can you own that which outlives you?"

Dulag and other pangats concluded peace pacts among themselves, to put an end to chronic intertribal wars which prevented unity against the dams. Balweg claims that the NPA has played an intermediary role in conflicts between tribes and villages which threaten to erupt into warfare. NPA members are also not permitted to get embroiled in tribal warfare. The NDF publication Liberation claims that the NPA has arbitrated settlements in seven cases.

Macli-ing Dulag's role was seen as so threatening to the government's plans for the region that, on the night of April 24, 1980, a team allegedly led by an Army lieutenant shot him dead in his home. Dungoc's home was also raided, and he was shot in the left wrist. Every year, hundreds of Igorots and their supporters gather near the Chico River to commemorate the assassination and renew the peace pact.

After the shooting, Dungoc joined the NPA and eventually the CPP. (One-third of the guerrillas are Party members, a figure which the Underground wants to reduce.) He says, "There is much concern for an individual to integrate into the tribe....It is not the name Communist or Tribal that is important. What is important is how you deal....with your fellow man." However, he says, "There are some comrades from the lowlands. Of course they have the kind of living they have in the lowlands. In the Cordillera there is much difference. In the national issue we are fighting for the same cause, but there is a contradiction..." "If the NDF is sincere," he says, "the interests of the cultural minorities will be respected." But if they are not, he says, stroking his headband, he will keep fighting. He hopes, though, that he can join his wife and four children and be a farmer again.

Over a month later, on June 28, Dungoc and another guerrilla would be killed as typhoon winds toppled a tree onto their camp shelter. At first the military would claim they were killed in battle.

Further up the mountain trails, the guerrillas stop in a dense and damp corner of the forest. Within two hours, they build a completely new camp, using their bolo knives to hack out new tent poles. One who is particularly keen with his bolo is the former warrior chief of Bugnay who saw joining the NPA as a better way to defend the interest of his Butbut tribe than his old practice of battling other tribes.

One of his uncles, however, was earlier in the year accused of trying to ignite a tribal war between the Butbut and Sadanga peoples. After a series of warnings, the NPA wanted to expel or "eliminate" him. According to Balweg's version, the barriofolk instead wanted to "reform" him, but failed. When he persisted, Balweg said, they placed him under house arrest and later called for the NPA. A "Peoples' Court" was conducted outdoors, with all the people of Bugnay as "judges." After being found guilty, he was privately "executed." His NPA cousin claims that he and other family members approved of the execution as a last resort, along with the rest of the Butbut.

Whatever the real story it is clear that the chess game is for keeps, and whoever is in the pay of the military--whether soldier, agent, informer or provocateur--is fair game. When a rook or a knight is taken out of the game, it is not placed gently by the side of the board.

No one denies that the NPA is growing. A U.S. Senate Committee has estimated NPA strength in the whole country at 30,000 regulars and irregulars, while the NPA claims 32,000 full-time and part-time fighters, two-thirds armed with high-powered rifles bought on the black market or captured. The NPA's are spread evenly throughout 58 provinces in the different regions of the country. If the guerrillas and the generals are playing chess, the chess board is the 7,100 islands in the archipelago. A favorite joke of the NPA's is that they cannot repeat Chairman Mao's famous Long March which brought him to power, lest it turn into the "Long Swim." Both the NPA and State Department agree that within 3-5 years, the NPA could reach a "strategic stalemate" with the military at which point there's nowhere for the government to go but downhill.

In some ways the war in the Cordillera is similar to the usual guerrilla war in the Philippines (or in other countries) and in some ways it is different. It is a war where ingenuity and creativity--throwing off old strategies and creating new ones--is the only way to encircle the king. The old military practice of "winning hearts and minds" is infinitely more complex than simply outsiders coming in to plow crops or build roads. It involves recognizing a cultural battle that has been waged for centuries.

It is a war where reclaiming culture is as important as recapturing territory. Like other indigenous peoples, the Igorots are faced with the perils which come with Westernization, such as alcoholism and suicide. It is not uncommon to see a young woman in the traditional Bird Dance sporting a brand-new "Ghostbusters" t-shirt. But it is through political battles, the legal and underground activists say, that many youth are rediscovering their culture.

It is a war where future plans affect present realities--the promise of a Cordillera autonomous region ranks in importance with the establishment of a new guerrilla front. Whether or not the NDF is sincere to the Igorots is the key; as Balweg says, it will be "answerable to the people of the Cordillera."

It is a war where the long slow process of establishing trust with the villagers has proved more effective for the NPA than major offensives have for the military. After my leaving the Cordillera (which was accomplished with a mixture of luck and good timing), I would receive a letter from the underground describing "...the very heavy militarization they staged just after you left....It was the civilians who suffered the consequences--they had the real scare in their life. According to one of them it was just like World War II--bombs being dropped in the mountains and helicopters hovering all day long. As of now they have ceased their operations, maybe because they can't find anybody anywhere."

It is a war where the gongs of tribal dancers are as important as mortar shells, where rice terraces are as important as tanks, where omen birds are as important as armalites. Whoever is on the side of the culture has a better chance of wining, because it is the culture which has defeated all previous invaders. It is one ingredient that the NPA hopes will carry its chess game to Stalemate and, ultimately, to Checkmate.

--Zoltan Grossman

THE VETERAN
Published by the
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P.O. Box 408594
Chicago, IL 60640
(312) 327-5756

Where We Came From,
Who Are We, Who Can Join

VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR

A National Veterans Organization Recognized as Tax Deductible.

Vietnam Veterans Against the War began in 1967 to join the ranks of those who wanted an end to U.S. involvement in Indochina. Basic principles of the organization have continued ever since: we have fought against unjust wars, whether the U.S. invasion of Indochina or, potentially, El Salvador, or the USSR's invasion of Afghanistan. We have supported, by whatever means were possible, those who are fighting for their own liberation. And we have stood with veterans of all eras in fighting for the things we need, have been promised, and have been earned.

From its early days VVAW has operated on the knowledge that the government will give vets what we need only when forced to do so--that vets get nothing for nothing. We've learned that when one vet fights alone, there is a limited amount he or she can accomplish, but when veterans unite to fight together, we can do much. VVAW has seen some real successes: we helped to put an end to U.S. troops in Southeast Asia, we helped get Nixon tossed out of office on his ear, we helped to win (to a great extent) amnesty for war resisters. With other vets groups we helped to stir up enough public furor that the Veterans Administration took its first halting steps to look for an answer to Agent Orange poisoning, and recognized what VVAW used to call Post Vietnam Syndrome when we were leading rap groups in 1970 (and is now called "post-traumatic stress or delayed stress syndrome") as a service-connected disability.

VVAW has consistently stood with the interests of vets of all eras, especially Vietnam and Vietnam-era vets. Sometimes this has brought us into conflict with the "traditional" vets organizations. While they have tended to stand behind the U.S. government and its various warlike manueverings, VVAW has always asked "Why?" We've opposed moves toward war, fight against registration and the draft which will follow, opposed inflated defense expenditures, welcomed vets with "bad" discharges into the organization and fought to get the discharge system dropped entirely from the military.

We know what it means to have been used once by the government and its corporate backers, and then be thrown away with a bad GI Bill, wretched healthcare, Agent Orange ravaging our bodies, vivid memories of the war often ravaging our minds, no jobs, and all the multitude of other problems Vietnam vets often face. We do not intend to see our children go through the same thing in the next war for somebody else's profit!

Vietnam Veterans Against the War

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BY-LAWS OF VVAW

1. The name of the organization shall be Vietnam Veterans Against the War.
2. Membership in the organization is open to all veterans (regardless of discharge) and to non-veterans interested in joining together to build a veterans movement. While VVAW is made up primarily of Vietnam and Vietnam-era veterans and their families, the organization also welcomes veterans from other eras and non-veterans.
3. Membership requirements include filling out a membership form, paying the $5 initiation fee and $1 monthly dues to the national office. Other requirements, not in conflict with national requirements, may be added by local chapters.
4. Local VVAW chapters will decide on their own chapter structure, by-laws and dues. Chapters will, to the best of their ability, work on the national programs of VVAW plus whatever local campaigns they decide on which are not in opposition to national programs.
5. National meetings of the organization, open to all members, will be held at least once yearly. A National Steering Committee, made up of the national officers, the regional officers, & an elected representative from each chapter shall meet as necessary. Such meetings may consist of phone calls to the chapter representatives if necessary.
6. National officers are elected at national meetings for a period of a year. They are responsible for the day-to-day operation of the organization, for speaking on behalf of the national organization, and for the publication and content of THE VETERAN and "The Guidon."
7. Regional coordinators, as needed will be elected at national meetings to serve 1 year terms; regional coordinators will facilitate and coordinate regional activities, aid the building of local chapters, and provide input from chapters into the national office.
8. Policies, programs and positions of VVAW nationally will, as much as possible, be decided at national meetings. If that is not possible, such decisions will be made by the National Steering Committee or, in emergencies, by the National Office.

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AGENT ORANGE DOSSIER

A new, 76-page "Agent Orange Dossier" has just come off the presses in Milwaukee. A collection of material which is not brought together anywhere else, the "Dossier" provides a wealth of information which both answers many questions about Agent Orange and will give the reader a lot more questions to think about. The "Dossier" costs $4; send for your copy from Milwaukee VVAW (address above) or the VVAW National Office, P.O.Box 25592, Chicago, IL 60625; rates for 5 or more copies can be discussed.

16 pages of testimony by victims of Agent Orange and experts on the effects of the chemical on Vietnam Vets and thier families. 50¢ post paid.

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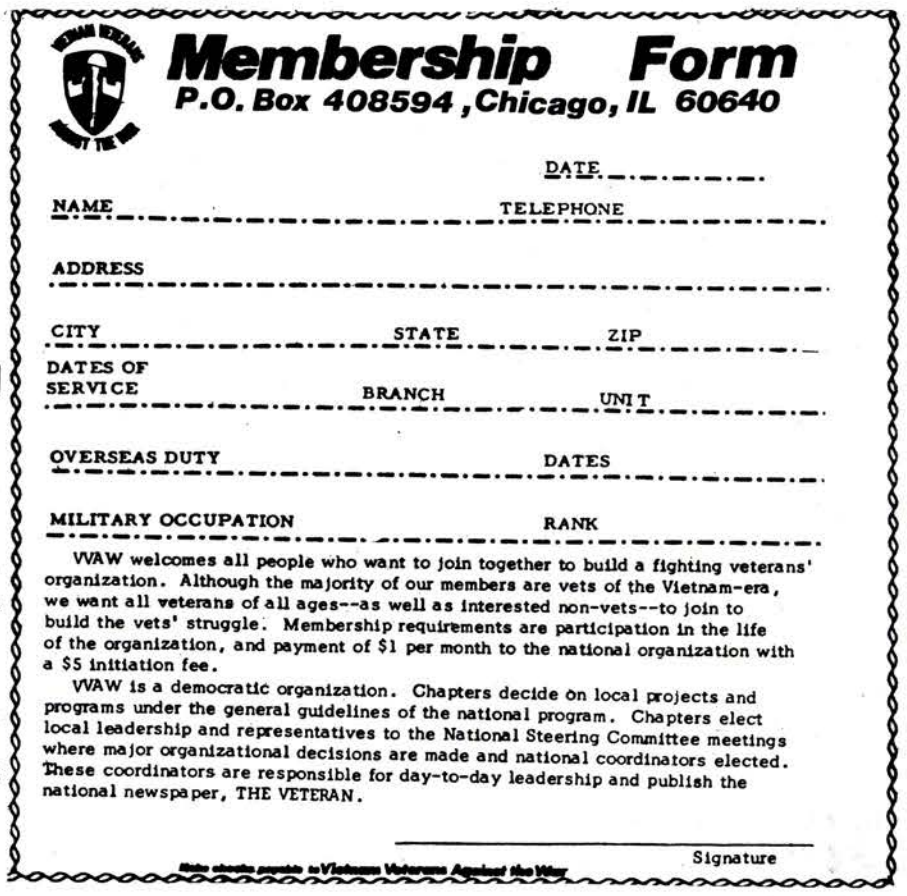

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OVERSEAS DUTY _____ DATES _____

MILITARY OCCUPATION _____ RANK _____

VVAW welcomes all people who want to join together to build a fighting veterans' organization. Although the majority of our members are vets of the Vietnam-era, we want all veterans of all ages--as well as interested non-vets--to join to build the vets' struggle. Membership requirements are participation in the life of the organization, and payment of $1 per month to the national organization with a $5 initiation fee.

VVAW is a democratic organization. Chapters decide on local projects and programs under the general guidelines of the national program. Chapters elect local leadership and representatives to the National Steering Committee meetings where major organizational decisions are made and national coordinators elected. These coordinators are responsible for day-to-day leadership and publish the national newspaper, THE VETERAN.

_____ Signature

Make checks payable to Vietnam Veterans Against the War

NO SKILLS, NO JOBS, NO FUTURE

RECRUITERS' PROMISES

An interested article appeared recently in the Wall Street Journal. The Journal, a notorious leftist rag, published a front-page article by one of its staff reporters on the civilian use of military training. It was entitled, "A Rude Awakening: Many Veterans Find Military Jobs No Road To Civilian Success." The thrust of the article is that for all the military's advertizing hype about learning a skill, most of those who enter the army looking for skills are given none, and most of those who learn skills in the army cannot use them outside.

The result, among other things, is a higher rate of unemployment for post-Vietnam veterans than the national average. While military recruitment advertisements promise a hot career with hot new technology, when the time comes to get out, the army counselors advise dischargees to take $4 an hour jobs if they can find them.

This is not surprising, for the fact of the matter is and always has been that armed forces are basically low tech. Cannon fodder does not have to have *much in the way of skills;* in fact it would be wasteful to put skilled people in a cannon fodder position, which is why many of the skilled jobs in the army are performed by civilians.

This can be seen in the figures for military manpower use. Craftsmen are only 3.2% of service jobs, electronic-equipment repairers 7.2%, medical specialists 5.1% and other technical fields, 1.9%. General infantry are 24%, service and supply 13%, and functional support and administration 13%. The figures on skilled positions are deceptive, low as they are; many of these jobs are extremely simple and specialized in items that don't exist on the civilian market. The Journal quotes one veteran who thought he was becoming an electronics-equipment repairman and who found that his job was to replace the same part in Minuteman missile after missile. Now unemployed and waiting to go back to school, the air force veteran says, "It was a waste of my time. Not everyone has a missile in his backyard."

Another veteran found out that being a "field communications specialist" meant carrying a big radio around the field. He is also unemployed. A New York veteran who left high school to join the Navy to work on planes spent his time changing oil in engines. As Gary McMahon, an unemployed Navy veteran said after talking his brother out of enlisting, "He's only going to learn to dismantle an M-16 in the dark."

The situation for minorities is even worse, needless to say. Blacks make up only 1/2 to 1/3 of the proportion of skilled positions that one would expect from their percentage in the services as a whole. The Journal shrinks from accusing the services of racism but ordinary humans will get the point. This is especially vile in view of the fact that many of the high tech ads for recruitment are deliberately aimed at minorities. To quote from the Journal: "The Army alone spent$3.2 million in the fiscal year ending Sept 30 to lure enlistees, mostly adolescents, with ads that almost always emphasize training or adventure. Many ads are tailored to minority groups. For instance, a campaign drawn up for the Army by Sosa & Associates, an advertising agency in San Antonio, is aimed at Hispanics. 'I wanted to learn about high-tech computers,' Spec Four Ivan Torres explains in one of the Sosa agency's ads."

This pitch has been very successful in some areas, so much so that real schools often cannot compete as naive youth are led off only to be dumped on the streets when they are discharged, in many cases forming unemployed veterans' ghettos around some bases.

The article in the Journal makes one very sad. Most youth who join the armed forces do so because their options are already limited. Given the promise of being paid a minimum wage and to have their basic needs taken care of while they learn a skill, it is no surprise many youth are taken in and lose years of their lives. And people at the bottom of our society can ill afford the time spent wandering down dead end corridors and following false leads. If they knew the truth many youth might try more promising paths.

But the army and its pimping advertizers, the same advertizers who hook youth on cigarettes with promises that they will become macho cowboys, have no sense of shame or decency. In a decent society people could sue such scum. And why would a service that puts 300 Marines in an unguarded building in a city notorious for its car bombs, or which would put 250 soldiers on a "Death Air" charter to save money hold back from lying to trick youth into joining?

--Evan Douthit
VVAW Chicago

Recruiting officer

Letter to VVAW after High School speaking engagement in New York.

Bronx ny.

Vietnam Vets Against the War
P.O. Box 74
Bronx Station Brooklyn, NY 11215

Dear, Clarence Fitch, Dave Cline,
I Would Like to Thank you For Comeing in and Telling me how The Military Service is Because at One time I Was going to Enlist. And What you Was Saying About Vietnam War is True Because my Uncle Was in the Vietnam War. And What you Was Saying About the War my Uncle said the Same thing. So thank you Very much You Really Enlighten me About the Military Service.

Thank you,
Richard Carr

VVAW_____9
RECRUITERS__0

"The Army's mission is national defense, not the creation of job opportunities or to help our people in civilian life." Former Brigadier General Mildred Bailey.

It's no secret that military recruiters have stepped up their activity in our nation's high schools. In Madison, Wisconsin, VVAW noticed this escalation not only in on-campus visits by military recruiters but also there seemed to be no systematic documentation of recruitment visits.

Madison School Board Policy #7541 states: "There shall be no active recruitment of high school pupils for any branch of the Armed Forces in the Madison Metropolitan School District." We believed the intent of that policy was clear and commendable; the school building was not the proper place to conduct military recruitment. The lack of well defined procedures had the effect of shifting policy-making responsibilities from the Board to individual schools. As a result VVAW found out that visits by recruiters to our high schools ranged from approximately 7 visits to 108 per year.

High school students face unprecedented pressures as they decide among increasingly limited post-high school options, of these options only the military has the resources to conduct a full-scale recruitment campaign including sophisticated marketing strategies, a massive advertising campaign and the deployment of representatives to every high school in the nation. Approximately $2900 of our tax dollars is spent in costs to recruit one enlistee!

We found military literature available in four of the five Madison high schools. In one school a prominent display was located in the main corridor. Sophisticated magazines, not identified as military recruiting literature were offered as general guidance magazines and promotional materials such as pencils and bumper stickers were given by teachers in their classrooms.

In some schools, students saw, heard or otherwise were aware of the presence of military recruiters on an almost daily basis. At some point, we contended, the quantity of visits had a qualitative effect.

Two Madison schools served as sites for administering the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery, a military recruiting and placement tool. Both schools advocated the AS UAB as an "excellent general aptitude test." VVAW challenged that assertion.

In March of 1985 VVAW Madison made the issue of recruitment on school campuses an issue in the school board elections calling a forum. Candidates for two school board seats agreed that military recruiters should not be allowed to actively recruit in the city's high schools. Two vocal candidates siding with VVAW's views were Mary Kay Baum and Nan Brien. We're happy to say they also won seats on the school board. Ms Baum later became chair of the policy and procedures committee which began looking at VVAW recommendations to rectify the recruitment problem.

On June 25th, the Madison School Board voted 6-0 to give preliminary approval to recommendations submitted by VVAW. They were as follows:

1. Recruiting materials: All recruiting literature will be labeled as such. Its presence or distribution will be limited to the guidance office and proportional to material on other post-high school options.

2. Guidance Counseling: High school guidance counselors will attend an annual workshop to acquaint themselves with issues in pre-enlistment counselling. No school employee will disseminate information regarding any individual student to military recruiters.

3. Military Recruiters: No military recruitment will be permitted on schoolgrounds. This prohibition must apply to all schools. The exception to this rule will be to permit recruiters to talk to students on bona fide career days--no more than two visits a year--when representatives of other post-high school options are present. The public will be notified of the date, time and place of these events.

4. Promotional Materials: Military promotional materials will not be distributed in the schools. Promotional events, displays of hardware, etc will not be conducted on school grounds.

5. ASVAB: The schools will not be used as a site for conducting the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery.

6. Military Academy Recruitment: Military academies will be accorded recruitment access equal to that of other four-year colleges. The activities of academy recruiters will be monitored, documented and reported by the principal to the superintendent.

7. Notification of Policy: Students and their parents will be notified annually in writing of the School Board's policy on military recruiting and its policy on the distribution of names, addresses, etc of students and parents.

8. Conflict of Interest: School employees will notify the Superintendent of any conflict of interest regarding military recruiting. Military personnel who are also school employees will exempt themselves from counselling students on the pro's and con's of military life.

9. Monitoring: The Superintendent will report annually to the Board on the schools' compliance with the Board policy governing military recruitment.

At the Madison Metropolitan school district meeting of August 26, 1985, the Board voted our recommendations in. The access of military recruiters to our schools was set at "2 days a year on career day." In effect this limits the military as a group to only those two days a year on our high schools.

It was a great victory not only for VVAW but also it was a precedent-setting decision for the state and country. VVAW collected and catalogued recruiter abuses. We saw a problem that need immediate attention and followed it up with action. That action now means our high schoolers are safe from abuse and misinformation from the military in our schools. The sweetheart deal between the armed forces and school counsellors and administrators encouraged access to students during school hours. That is now ended, but we will stay vigilant.

--Madison VVAW

MILITARY SERVICE
Choice or Chance?

An Information Packet for Students, Parents and Faculty

NEW VVAW PAMPHLET
This 12-page pamphlet, printed with a Spanish section, is designed to inform young people, parents and teachers about the military service--the truth, not the recruiting ads.
VVAW
Box 74, Van Brunt Sta.
Brooklyn, NY 11215
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for vietnam era veterans
help without hassles
Vet Center
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get the help you need
. . without the hassles.
Stop by or call
Consult phone directory in your area

Double Standard Equals Half Truths

ISRAEL AND THE PALESTINIANS

A U.S. citizen, husband and father of 3, a Catholic whose greatest crime was that of exercising his constitutional rights to speak for the rights of his people, the Palestinians, to justice and self-determination was murdered by terrorist operations in the U.S. What happened to guaranteed safety at home?

Although the assassination of Alex Odeh, Western Director of the ADC (American-Arab Anti-discrimination Committee) was surely an act of terrorism, it was virtually ignored by the same major media which fed its hype to us in the wake of the cowardly and shameless murder of the elderly husband, father and paralyzed Klinghoffer by Palestinian hijackers on the Italian ship the Achille Lauro. This double standard, highlighted by the tragic case of Alex Odeh, should concern African/Americans supporting justice in South Africa (and being systematically murdered in the U.S.) where freedom fighters are called terrorists. Maybe the $15 million terrorist-catching fund should be used in Alex Odeh's case.

In October Israel launched a fierce airstrike against the PLO headquarters in Tunisia (a place where the U.S. had guaranteed safety to the PLO after they were forced to flee in the face of Israel's brazen invasion of Lebanon two years ago. This action took place while 6 or more U.S. battleships were docked off the coast of Tunisia, a standard since the 1973 oil embargo, and the U.S. government refused to condemn the cowardly attack on women and children, though it was condemned by the freedom-loving Jewish community in Tunisia, at home, and worldwide.

When did this all begin? I will start with some brief glances at the histories of these two great peoples beginning with the Moor's introduction of their Jewish brothers to a vanquished Europe and their decision to stay after the moors were driven back south to Africa. Anti-Jewish sentiment, easily fanned over the centuries due to the positions of Jews as tax collectors and money-changers, was made easier because the Jewish people were easily separated out due to fiercely sustained cultural differences. It almost brought this landless people to extinction and culminated in the Nazi-led slaughter during World War II. In the words of Israel Zangwill, one of the founders of political Zionism, the Jews have been "a people without land" in search of "a land without people"--similar to Columbus "finding" the Indians and "discovering" America, or the Dutch "Finding an unpeopled land in South Africa." In this case the displaced people were to be the people of Palestine.

Political Zionism, as opposed to the cultural and religious variants, is a nineteenth-century colonial movement of some European Jews to found an exclusive Jewish colony, preferably in Palestine. It is a secular Jewish nationalism dedicated to the purpose of founding a Jewish state. The father of political Zionism, Theodor Herzl, talks of Jews returning to their historical "fatherland and representing Western civilization." He also asserted that the Jewish state was designed to "form a part of a wall of defense for Europe in Asia, an outpost of civilization against barbarism." Zionists deny that the state of Israel is a settler colony and argue instead that Jews have eternal and exclusive entitlement conferred by God to Abraham and his seed. Yet an equally important aspect is the assertion of the colonist's superiority over the native. The most pernicious claim to specialness is the one that invokes God. This invocation is the total and ultimate justification. Usurpers become agents of God's will; human acts are transmuted into a divine calling and responsibility is avoided.

J. Blankfort/Palestine Focus

Palestinian showing pass book to Israeli soldier. Like Black South Africans, Palestinians are denied basic rights in their own land.

The United Nations, forced and instigated by the U.S. and Great Britain, violated its own charter on November 29, 1947, and permitted the World Council to partition Palestine against the will of its people. The partition of Palestine is unique in history of the UN: the first and only example of involuntary partitioning. In the final voting the Philippines, Liberia and South Africa were for the partition, resulting in the forcible implantation of the Zionist state of Israel on the threshhold of the emerging Third World without obtaining the voluntary recognition of a single Arab or African state. This incident exploited the backward and racist actions of those western countries and the historically shameful use of the Jewish people as scapegoats.

According to a 1922 census, approximately 750,000 persons lived in Palestine, only about 80,000 of whom were Jews. In 1931, an official census stated that there were one million people in Palestine, including approximately 175,000 Jews. No official census was taken after that date but estimates indicate that approximately two million people lived in Palestine before the outbreak of the 1947-48 war including approximately 600,000 Jews who owned about 7% of the total land area. After the fighting ended in 1949, only 156,000 Arabs (of 900,000 who lived there before the fighting broke out) remained in the land occupied by Israel which constituted 80% of the area of Palestine. Another 500,000 Patestinians were driven out after the 1967 war.

That the exodus was planned Zionist policy is confirmed by Brigadier General Sir John Bagot Glubb who relates a conversation between a British officer of the Jordan Arab Legion and a Palestine Government official who was Jewish. The British officer asked whether the new Jewish state would not have many internal troubles in view of the fact that its Arab inhabitants would be equal in number to the Jews. The Jewish official replied: "Oh no! That will be fixed. A few calculated massacres will soon get rid of them."

The Palestinians' Lidice is not called My Lai but Deir Yassin. It happened on April 9, 1948. Before May 15, 1948, 800,000 Arabs had fled the Zionist terror. And the Arabs continued to flee, the women and children first of all; the men stayed to defend the towns and villages. Soon, Jaffa, Haifa, Lydda etc were "cleaned" of their Arab population. Many expelled Palestinians settled in small Lebanese villages near the border. They wanted to be among the first to return home after the fighting as all refugees became entitled to do according to the UN resolution on Palestinian refugees. We all know that did not happen. The Israeli authorities allowed no Palestinian Arab to return, and any Jew can gain citizenship except Black Jew Falashas or Black Hebrews. The Zionists wanted the country but not its people, and this was so from the beginning. The Palestinian liberation movement has been forced to answer violence with violence; it has sacrificed itself in the unequal struggle and it has been forced to face death every day. And it has continued, as was evident what another hostage related his experiences:

"One or another of the guards asked me more than once whether I was aware of what had happened when the battleship New Jersey was off the Lebanese coast, shelling. They spoke of houses being pulverized by the cannon fire. My captors were incensed at what they regarded as terrorism by the U.S. Navy, and I had nothing to say to counter it. The shelling was supposedly in retaliation for what had happened to the U.S. Marines when their camp was car-bombed, a terrible thing and a loss of a large number of lives at the same time. I don't think there was much sense in what seemed just random shooting into the mountains to say we didn't like it."

These words were spoken by Rev Benjamin Weir, a 61-year-old Presbyterian missionary in Lebanon since 1953, who was held hostage by Lebanese Shiite revolutionaries from May 8, 1984 until September 14, 1985. Upon his return Rev Weir suggested real negotiations, using more carrot and less stick in future dealings with the Middle East war for independence. I was reminded of Vietnam and what happened to unarmed civilians in what we called "retaliation" against Vietnamese defending themselves and in their country, too. It is a grim reminder that we live in a world where regional wars can rapidly turn into global wars.

Since the Second World War and the founding of Israel, every U.S. President has issued or endorsed policies stating America's willingness to use military force to influence policy in the Middle East. Much like the Palestinians today, Jews were in search of a home-

LETTERS TO VVAW

THE VETERAN welcomes letters, comments and criticisms. Please write. Also, send along any poetry, drawings, photos or stories you would like to see in the paper.

Class Action Attorney Still Ripping Off Vets !

I wish to share with you another example of the greed which our appointed counsel in the Agent Orange Class Action Suit has exhibited most recently. I have, as well, shared this with Judge Weinstein, who has yet to give a shit!

On June 4, 1985, I wrote to the Judge, requesting two copies of the Final Settlement Decision in the Agent Orange Class Action Suit. One copy was to go to the Regional Office of VVAW, the other copy was to be added to my family's file, the one that contains my veteran husband's military and medical information, my two children's birth records, complete with deformities; their medical records from surgeries, hospitilizations and seizures, as well as the hundreds of pages of school records, from Special Education, and Early Childhood Development Programs for Handicapped Children. The file that takes up a fourth of a cabinet, the one with 12 years of our suffering in it.

On July 11th I received the following reply from my "appointed Counsel":

Schlegel, Azeris & Romanyak
Attorneys At Law
One North LaSalle Street
Suite 3900
Chicago, IL 60602

Dear Ms Wachtendonk:

Thank you for your letter of June 4, 1985 directed to Clerk of the Court in the Eastern District of New York. Please forgive me for the delay in responding to same.

Per your request, enclosed herewith please find two copies of Judge Weinstein's Memorandum, Order & Judgment of Distribution of the Settlement Fund.

We ask that you please remit $24.66 for the copying charges involved. ($12.33 per copy.

Thank you for your anticipated cooperation.

Yours very truly,
/s/Stephen J. Schlegel

This creep anticipated too much when he anticipated cooperation from me at this point in the game. He and his cronies made millions of dollars for a year's work on this case--on my family's monstrous file--the one with the 1400 pages of pain, and 7 years of grunt work stuffed in it. My family's file and many others. We have yet to see any testing, treatment or compensation--I doubt that we ever will--thanks to Schlegel's big deal with the chemical companies! The one that made him richer, and us alot sicker in our souls.

As you can see by the letter, the shit wants $12.33 per copy for the Final Decision. I guess he doesn't think he made enough off us yet: Mr Schlegel sent only one copy and billed us for two. I think he deserves the "Grenade of the Month" for the rest of his life!

--Sukie Wachtendonk
VVAW/Madison

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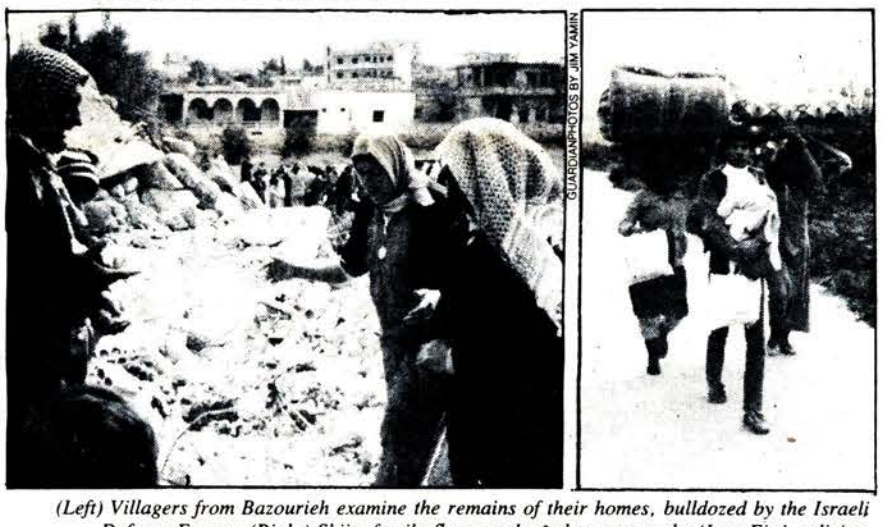


GUARDIAN PHOTOS BY JIM YAMIN

(Left) Villagers from Bazourieh examine the remains of their homes, bulldozed by the Israeli Defense Forces. (Right) Shiite family flees northward to escape the 'Iron Fist' policies.

land and, like the PLO, were betrayed by people they wanted to help them. Like Jews, the extermination of Palestinians now stands at near holocaust proportions. Our government has access to and uses bases in Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Oman, Egypt, Diego Garcia, Morocco, Kenya, Somalia and Israel. Vladimir Jobotinsky, in an essay entitled "The Iron Law, 1925" wrote, "If you wish to colonize a land in which people are already living, you must provide a garrison for the land, or find a benefactor who will maintain the garrison on your behalf."

Zionism is a colonizing adventure and therefore it stands or falls on the question of armed forces. There lies the important role of the Jewish lobby, U.S. tax dollars, and the unholy alliance and similarity that exists between Israel and South Africa and their reciprocal military agreements (mainly because of similar relationships with their indigenous people).

As we once used and threw away veterans, as recently as in the aftermath of Vietnam, it becomes clearer everyday that our fight, as Americans, is right here, against a number of abuses: tens of thousands of American farmers and homeowners have and are being foreclosed on; hundreds of thousands of auto and steel workers will never again work in those areas; Black infant mortality rates are passing the rate of inflation; drug, alcohol and child abuse are claiming more victims every second; and divorce and separation statistics have exceeded marriage figures. Millions of our unemployed are watching their desperately-needed, hard-won benefits being voted away by fickle politicians trying to hang on to their own jobs and voting in more war and destruction and less peace and improved quality of life.

If you are one of the fortunate few who has a job, you may well be finding working conditions more dangerous and demanding, with fewer benefits and less pay. More unorganized (due to deregulation and union-busting) and runaway shops (in the name of more profits) are turning great cities into bombed-out shanty towns of of malnourished, sick, hungry and homeless people. Yet, prison construction continues. One might ask whether or not our government's interference in the internal affairs of other countries, mostly in the Third World (Asia, Africa, Central and South America and the Caribbean) has made the possibility of a face lift for the Ugly American a more remote possibility than it need be. Meanwhile, big businesses are still reporting record profits while this great nation has become the largest debtor nation in the world.

The solution to the war for independence in the Middle East does not lie in U.S. arms sales thinly veiled as "peace talks." It must begin with a recognition of the rights of all involved, in an atmosphere of mutual respect. It is only through the recognition that no people or nation has the right to supersede the right to self-determination of any other that true peace can be achieved--in the Middle East--or anywhere else in the world.

--Rick Tingling-Clemmons
VVAW-Washington DC

Info Wanted

Underground Radio

Has anyone ever heard of "Dave Rabbit" and "Radio First Termer"--a pirate acid-rock show broadcast on Saigon's FM dial in 1970? A student doing a thesis on Radio in Vietnam desperately seeks Vietnam vets to recount their experiences listening, making or reacting to radio while in-country, especially the pirate stations. From AFVN to Hanoi Hannah. Please contact Alexis Muellner, Interlock Media Associates, P.O.Box 619, Cambridge, MA 02238.

Info Wanted

Meaningful input is being solicited from Vietnam veterans and anyone with detailed knowledge of the Revolutionary War for "Soldier-In-Time (The Ballad of Billy Lindsay)", a new play-with-music and possible movie which draws parallels between the Revolutionary and the Vietnam wars.

Specific areas of input include facts and op inions about how Vietnam and/or Revolutionary War vets felt: about being drafted; fighting; relationships with officers and commanding officers; the impact the war had on their lives. Input should be mailed to Special Project Researchers, Inc., P.O.Box 384, Devon, PA 19333.

NURSES

On October 15th, in the lobby of Chicago's City Hall, Mayor Harold Washington unveiled a 33-inch bronze statue of NURSE, dedicated to the nurses who served in Vietnam.

The Mayor, honoring the more than 10,000 women who served in the Vietnam War, said, "This statue is testimony to the many and varied contributions women have made...."

VVAW was well represented at this event by ex-Captain, Army Vietnam nurse, 1968-69, Eileen Finnerty; Bob Spicher, Army, Vietnam, 1968-69; and Virg McFadden, Chicago Chapter coordinator.

"The time has come for America to honor all people, including women, who served in the Vietnam War," Mayor Washington said. "This statue represents a composite of the ideals for which women served their nation in the performance of their duty and will be an important statement of our gratitude for a job well done."

Three 33-inch bronze statues and one 8-foot bronze statue, all identical, make up the Vietnam Nurses Memorial.

For further information on NURSE, contact the Vietnam Women's Memorial Project, Inc, 511 11th Ave South, Box 45, Minneapolis, MN 55415.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

CUTS

of which was obtained by the DAV, is a damning indictment of Gramm-Rudman. And it graphically points out why the White House refused to let Walters appear before the Committee. The draft letter predicted that disabled veterans and their survivors could lose $464 million in compenastion and pension payments in fiscal year 1987 alone.

"Further, it estimated that a 4% cut in medical appropriations in 1987 under Gramm-Rudman would leave the VA $812 million short of what it needs to provide health care. Such a cut would force the system to reduce the number of inpatient episodes by 170,210 and reduce outpatient visits by 765, 944.

"Such cuts, the letter stated, 'would require serious consideration of hospital closures. A 4% reduction in CBO's 1987 estimate ... would equate to closing approximately 12 500-bed hospitals. A 6% reduction in CBO's estimate, or 10% below current services would equate to closing approximately 15 500-bed hospitals.'

"The letter described equally serious cuts in all facets of VA operations, including research, education and training, and veterans assistance."

The house passed a version that exempted veterans, survivors compensation and pensions from the sequestering provisions of the Gramm-Rudman bill. This House version was sent back to the Senate.

Senator Donald Riegle of Michigan and Senator Alan Cranston offered an amendment that closely followed the House version. It also supplied limited protection to VA health care funding.

"One question still searches for an answer though. How can any member of Congress deny cost-of-living adjustments to disabled veterans, protect those COLAs for Social Security recipients, preserve broad tax loopholes for big business, and then stand up and say Gramm-Rudman is 'fair and equitable.'"

The debate over the Riegle Amendment went on in the Senate where, "the battle against a fair deal for service-connected disabled veterans is being led, predictably, by Senator Alan Simpson, Senate Majority Whip and past Chairman of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee. His mostly silent partner on this issue is Senator Frank Murkowski current Chairman of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee.

"Senator Simpson:'There is a myth that floats around this curious arena that service-connected disability compensation is only for those veterans who are injured or disabled as a result of combat.

"'That is not the truth. Nothing is further from the truth. You will hear this from some veterans' organizations using emotional rhetoric to sway some very patriotic Senators to support the welfare of their members. I think we ought to be aware of what we do when we get into this situation and deal with issues like this: let's look at 10% disability. That is 40% of the disability compensation in the records of the VA. Those disabilities consist of things like superficial varicose veins below the knee, mild ulcers with symptoms once or twice a year, flat feet, hammer toes, frostbite. Some of that could occur while you were stationed at Fort Carson, CO and ripped up your knee at the ski run at Vail, or in the mess tent when you jabbed a potato peeler in your leg while you were doing KP, or become involved in an automobile accident near an off-post bar after having a few or becoming involved in many, many things that have absolutely nothing to do with combat-related activity.

"I say again, Mr President, and I shall say it one more time: Show me a combat veteran or veteran from a combat theater with any type of ailment or malady or conditions and I say give him anything it takes--anything they need--and I shall be right there to do that.'

Senator Murkowski embraces the same basic philosophy. In a recent letter he wrote, "You and I both know that circumstances of service-connected disabling incidents vary from the more heroic to the most embarrassing.' One veteran suffered a shattered let while skiing on leave. One veteran may be service-connected for combat wounds, while another is rated as service-connected for a disease such as diabetes, hypertension or multiple sclerosis that many nonveterans contract as an unfortunate part of everyday life. All these pairs of veterans are presumed equally service-connected, and all are given equal tax free compensation benefits and medical priority by the VA.'

"There are a couple of ways to respond to both Senators' contempt for the 10% award of service connection. If they begrudge a serviceman or woman that award because of flat feet or a cardiovascular condition, they should be pointing the finger at the military and not the VA.

"Individual military services determine such line-of-duty disabilities. The VA's only consideration is in administering the payments made to the individual.

"And what of flat feet? The individual was accepted for military service in spite of that condition. We know, as well, that many people who only marginally qualify for military service are eagerly taken by the services, particularly during war time.

Until you can prove it's service related, there's nothing we can do!

"Is Senator Simpson now saying we should welcome those people into service during war, but forget about them--and their no-doubt aggravated condition--after the war?

"Both Senators cite what they consider to be petty examples of the 10% award. And I believe they begrudge those 10 %'ers the $66 a month they receive in disability compensation.

"We maintain those disabilities aren't so petty, and the government pays disability compensation at bargain basement rates. A finger lost, either through a truck accident or by an enemy bullet, is compensated at the 10% rate. Like I said, that's $66 a month.

"Now consider a typical civilian court award for the loss of that same finger at work. ... One of the lowest such court awards to a civilian was "175,000 for the loss of his little finger on his left hand. Now if that award was prudently invested and drew only 10% interest a year, that's $17,500 or more than $1400 a month.

"Or consider the fellow who loses most of the vision in one eye from an industrial accident. If it happened to him in the service, he would receive $66 a month. But since it happened to him in his civilian job the court awarded him $100,000. Again, figuring it's been invested at 10% per year, that's $833 a month.

"Before anyone shouts that the VA's disability compensation program pays too much to veterans--or pays to the wrong class of veterans--they should compare what the government pays against what the private sector pays--and who gets compensated.

"And when it comes to providing disability compensation to the people with hypertension or arthritis, critics must ask themselves what alternatives exist for veterans. They're not covered by a disability insurance policy like those in the provate sector. Nor should they be. After all, the federal government has given them a guarantee that it will care for them and compensate them should they become injured or disabled while on active duty."

So once again veterans and their families get kicked in the teeth. "Your country will take care of the wounded soldiers and their widows"--every President since Lincoln has told us this. Now when the largest group of veterans--those from World War II--is reaching the age of 65, where will these service-connected vets and pensioners go? Out in the street like a bunch of old meat.

Some of the blame lies at the feet of the veterans themselves. Where are all these concerned and angry vets? Why weren't they at a VVAW meeting or other events of their organization, be it VVAW or any other veterans' group.

It's up to us to make the difference and get active. If you don't think it can get any worse, just remember the monsoons which always got worse--and Congress is not a cycle of nature.

THEY SAY CUT BACK
WE SAY FIGHT BACK!!

--John Lindquist
VVAW National Office
(with a lot of help from the DAV)

We debate teenage drinking and teenage voting, says John Ketwig in his book, ...and a hard rain fell; how about teenage war? A good question, and one which Ketwig comes back to in various forms. Not a novel, not a journal or a diary, ...and a hard rain fell began as Ketwig's attempt to put something on paper to describe, for his young daughters, the experience of Vietnam. He expected, he says, to write 15 or so pages. Eighteen months later was ...and a hard rain fell; Ketwig describes the process as being like squeezing pus from an infected wound.

After reading Ketwig's book it isn't too hard to see how the experience of putting the events on paper could have made the wound of Vietnam better, just as post traumatic stress rap groups have, for years, given vets a chance to talk about their experiences. In the process of talking and sharing what happened the veteran can somehow get out the infection that the experience has caused; squeezing pus from a wound is exactly the right way to describe the healing that takes place.

This is one fine book. It's familiar and comfortable, in one sense, because so many of the things that Ketwig experienced are so like what every other Vietnam vet went through. (It isn't easy to write a book which covers the many different experiences; after all, the GI who spent a year in the field humping the boonies did not have the same experience as one who sat behind a typewriter at MACV headquarters with a carpet on the floor. Ketwig, a mechanic who occasionally drove convoys, managed to have a little of both experiences in his year.) Much will come flooding back, emotions and events that are long forgotten.

While few of the events he describes in the book were earthshaking, the emotions they trigger are intensely familiar. Who can forget the boredom that was a year in Vietnam (with, of course, a few moments of often unwanted excitement); or the deep, quick and still tentative friendships that grew up among people who might never see one another again; or the utter frustration of a military bureaucracy where there were still lifers who believed shined shoes were the most important thing going; or the sense that, in the last few days in country, every round that might fall anywhere nearby was aimed right for you? Intense feelings recur though the events described are now 15 to 20 years in the past.

Ketwig can recreate these emotions by writing an intensely honest book. Early in the book he volunteers to drive in a convoy (the last time he volunteers, incidentally). By reacting right, driving through an ambush which blows up the truck in front of him, Ketwig performs the kind of heroic act which happened all the time in Vietnam and which seldom if ever got recognized by medals or awards. Yet he does not write this experience like a hero; unlike other Vietnam recollections, this book does not try to make the author's experience one of a kind. Again and again Ketwig finds the detail which makes an experience come vividly to life.

Occasionally Ketwig gets away from the firsthand and repeats some of the old "truths" about the war. Perhaps it is true of any war, but for sure Vietnam had its share of rumor, half truths and total lies that were so often repeated that they took on a life of their own.

Take "Black Syph Island," for instance. Ketwig mentions, without much comment, the supposed super strain of VD contracted in Vietnam. In his version of the story, the unfortunates who get this disease were sent to Okinawa and listed as MIA's. I remember first hearing of the dreaded "Black Syph" during a hygiene lecture by an E-8 at Ft Riley, Kansas, during a week-long "get-ready-to-go-to-Vietnam" class. Looking back I think he believed in this mysterious island off the coast of Vietnam where victims rotted in obscurity.

Let's take on this story: first, there was no Black Syph and no Black Syph Island. MIA's are just that--MIA. But it's not hard to see where the story came from. In the days before penicillin, VD could cripple an army, so the military would use whatever would work to scare people away from sexual contact with the enemy. And the stories hang on even when VD can be cured with some ease. In fact, there could probably be a fascinating book written on the history of the military's attitudes toward VD, but stories of "Black Syph" probably didn't keep many GI's away from Vietnamese women.

This kind of story is not especially dangerous. Other rumors are more dangerous by far. Disproving any of the stories which came out of Vietnam is difficult; it is always possible that something happened once and that one instance has turned into thousands. Ketwig talks of the child, explosives strapped to his back, who wanders into a crowd of GI's and explodes. This kind of story is always devastating since it carries with it the implicit point that the Vietnamese (or at least the National Liberation Front) had such low regard for human life and for children that a child would be so used. If the VC used children in that way on a regular basis, it is hard to imagine that they would have won the allegiance of large portions of the Vietnamese population. It is a simple untruth with a great appeal to many people (it is easy to hate an enemy who uses children like that) and was cleverly pushed by the U.S. military.

Or there's the equally devastating story about peace protestors around every airport when vets returned from Vietnam. Ketwig mentions the story of the Marine who survived for 13 months in Vietnam only to be killed, presumably by protestors, when he got off the plane. This story, usually told in the form of the vet being spit on when he got off the plane, is another propaganda effort, showing that the protestor and the vet had no common interest--which just plain was not true. And, for many of us, had a protestor spit on us after we got off the plane, we would have tried to tear out their throats.

...and a hard rain fell is a fine book to help explain Vietnam to someone who was not there. Ketwig is full of questions similar to the teenage war question mentioned at the beginning of this review. None of the questions are treated lightly, yet the book is a long ways from being a political tract. It is far too humorous, tender and lively for that.

Ketwig did not come home after Vietnam but instead spent a year in Thailand in hopes of marrying a woman he met on R&R. That didn't happen, but Ketwig grew very close to the people with whom he lived. His humaneness keeps coming through.

What it all amounts to is that neither Ketwig, nor any of the others we meet in the course of the book, belong in a war like Vietnam. That is the final statement that the book makes; it is a good one. And it is deeply true. Read the book and you will see why.

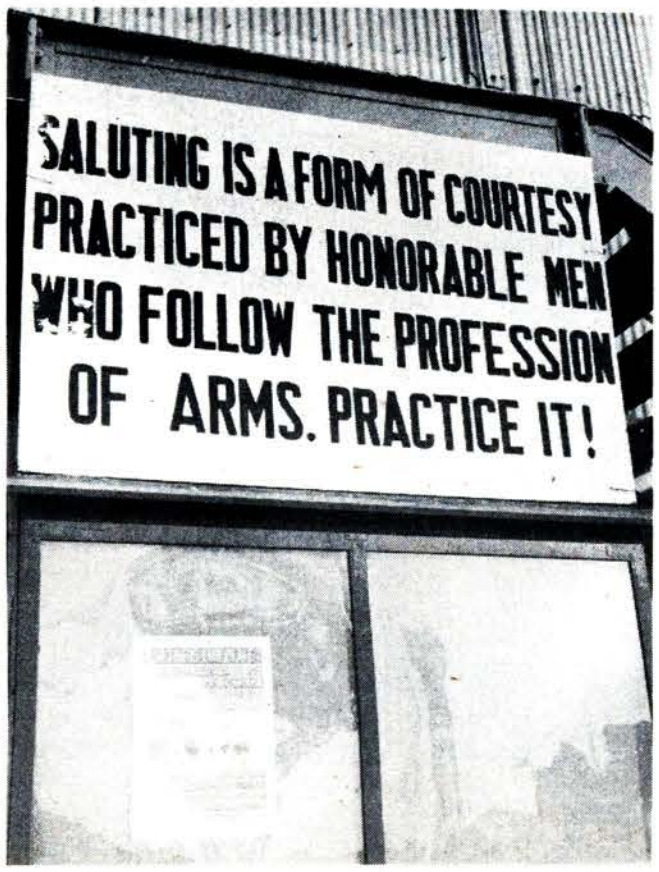
--Pete Zastrow
National Office, VVAW

A concise and non-technical aid to understanding PTSD, 25¢ post pd.

RECOLLECTIONS

VVAW invites contributions to "Recollections"--stories or poems describing the military or Vietnam.

ATTACK IMMINENT



Standing the day watch with a LT CMDR on a lazy Saturday afternoon at Naval Air Station Atsugi, Japan, when the phone rings and we are notified by Base Communications to send someone down right away to pick up a Top Secret message.

"I'll go," I tell the Duty Officer.

I was only cleared for Confidential but they always gave me the Top Secret stuff anyway and I always rubbed it in their face later telling them I could have been a spy and stuff like that... but that's another story.

Back at Flight Operations we decode the message and find out that American Forces in Korea have shot down a Russian MIG over the DMZ and Condition Red is in force...meaning Attack is Imminent.

"Call the Crash Crew and tell them to activiate the air raid siren to alert the base," the Duty Officer commands.

"Yes, Sir."

We all watch the red Crash Crew truck pull up in front of Flight Operations and a swabbie fire-fighter get out and climb up the ladder to the siren which looks like a jeep mounted on top of a forty-foot metal pole. After ten minutes he blimbs back down and comes into Operations. The siren is still quiet.

"What the Hell is going on with the siren," the D.O. demands of the terrified fire-fighter.

"Well, Sir," the Enlisted Man started to explain (embarrassed as Hell), "You see, Sir, he says scartching the polished floor with his spit-shined shoe and twitching nervously. "The Japanese guy who runs the air raid siren is off on the weekends and no one in the Crash Crew knows how to turn it on."

OFF ON THE WEEKENDS
NO ONE KNOWS HOW TO TURN IT ON
OH, JESUS CHRIST

We are being attacked by the North Koreans by air and no one can turn on the siren to alert the base.

The LT COMDR says that there will be hell to pay for this and he begins to make out a report. I suggest that we should figure out how to alert the base and he keeps on bitching about the siren and the Crash Crew. So I get in the pick-up truck and start drving around the base telling everyone:

THE KOREANS ARE COMING
THE KOREANS ARE COMING

When I get back to Flight Ops everyone is looking for the base instructions concerning Condition Red. They finally figure out where our air raid shelters are and that we should be in them

BUT WHERE ARE THE GAS MASKS?????

We look high and we look low.

Finally some of us dumb enlisted guys suggest that we could just forget about the gas masks, sir, and just get into the shelters, but it didn't really matter because several hours had past by then and someone came by from Communications with a message that the alert was called off.

I don't remember anything changing after that...I mean why bother the alert was over... right?

--Joe McDonald

HOLLYWOOD HEROES

Holy hand grenades you've done it again!
Your theatrics,
on stage acrobatics
and your photographic cosmetics.
Touch up here, a little makeup there
special effects...roll it..cut it..edit it..it's a print, call it a day!
Mix it up in the lab and presto...stupendous Stallone!
One man alone...does it alone
he's badder than nuclear fission
he's Rambo...one on a mission.
Hollywood give us a break...you think you're so creative with your theatrical glitter.
Oh and America!
You also displayed some particular talents during the Vietnam war by choosing the young of Americas litter.
What a combination!
Politicians create and set the stage of war,
staring CHAOS and CONFUSION!
Cinematographers get the go ahead and pilferage their way through the remains of our youth.
Let no bone remain unturned!
Yes the camera and the chaos,
the glamor and the gloom
of sending Americas youth to their patriotic doom.
YOU GUYS!...with the cameras are some artists,
you just whip out the ol' photographic easel and apply some of your cosmetics to touch up the situation.
That's right, you just hand out the script and a gun full of blanks and of course the non-lethal enemies.
Hollywood....you'll never know what terrors the "DAWNS EARLY LIGHT" can bring.
Your special effects will remain on film, and the actors will walk away and return home.
Our "special effects or defects" IF I MAY will forever remain in our minds.
Hollywood....it's time you stop ripping us off!
You took our experiences and pain
and gave it to John Wayne.
For the Duke, it was simple to respond to the patriotic call.
"Quiet on the set...let's roll 'em...action!"
Yes so easy for Hollywood to decorate
while we who fought deteriorate.
The Duke was and probably still is more of a welcomed hero than any of us.
Again you poured all of your thought into a "movie mold" and handed America one Green Beret, O.D. in color
patriotic and robotic in mind!
America loved your hero
totally glamorized,
while we were abroad being traumatized.
But het!...We were the ones at the point of impact...
at ground zero.
Holy Hollywood...Is there such a thing as reincarnation even in the land of film and fantasy?
What happened to the Duke anywar?...Dis he keep his appointment with "Fantasy Island"?
Do souls really linger in "soul pools" and wait for the proper vehicle to manifest itself in?
You betcha'...cause Hollywood has found the incarnation...the perfect body,
the perfect killing machine
the perfect hero.
Hollywood you can fabricate your heroes
but when will you learn that you cannot fabricate our feelings?
You must stop being so presumtuous!
Here you are telling everybody that "we're bad and don't need anybody."
Here you are perpetuating the "I can kick everybody's ass by myself" syndrome!
As if veterans already don't have enough stereotyping to deal with.
Our strength does not lie in violence!
Do you understand?
Obviously not...because you take it back to that point.
a point which you know nothing about.
Hollywood where in the hell are you coming from with your images?
Give us a break...do you think we veterans are mesmerized and goo-goo eyed over Rambo?
He's kicking ass and killing people.
So you assume that, that must be our "projection" also.
Hollywood....
don't think, don't act
don't fake it, don't do anything for us
don't do your best...simply let us rest from your onslaught og ignorance..of the fact.
You can buy actors
you can buy guns that shoot blanks,
and you can pay somebody to play dead
but it's all a game, it's all visual.
Special effects...is what the audience gets...people are strange...destructive curiosity.
But again it is veterans who came home with the special...defects!
An eye on Hollywood...is easy
but the American audience couldn't stand to look at us.
But here we are...and visual too!...in yo' face!
You make millions off our image....false image
and decorate your Hollywood heros with Grammys.
We veterans have to fight with the Director (Uncle Sam) for compensation for services rendered.
We are simply treated as "extras" in a political movie.
Rated P.G.....PARENTAL GUIDENCE?...Hah!
Vietnam was and is a sensitive experience, to say the least.
Vietnam is sacred ground to us.
Those who dare tread that ground should be cautious and respectful of those who lived and of those who died there.
No cameras.
No microphones.
Rambo go home.....to Hollywood.

---Juan Lara
Eugene, OR 9/23/85